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THE  
Preacher's Complete Homiletical  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN).

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY  
VARIOUS AUTHORS.

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New York  
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY  
LONDON AND TORONTO

1892

THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF NUMBERS.



A

# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF

## NUMBERS

(CHAPTERS XVI. TO XXXVI.)

*WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDICES, Etc. Etc.*

BY

REV. WILLIAM JONES.

V. IV

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## HOMILETIC COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the history of the rebellion of Korah and his company. The time and place of this event are not recorded. It is probable that it occurred in one of the early years of their penal wanderings.

Verse 1. *Korah* was a Kohathite, and cousin to Moses and Aaron (Exod. vi. 16-21). *Dathan and Abiram . . . . and On* were Reubenites; and were probably discontented because the rights of primogeniture were taken from their tribe, and the tribe of Judah placed before them. Moreover the camps of Reuben and of the Kohathites were pitched on the same side of the tabernacle (chaps. ii. 10, iii. 29); thus the two families were conveniently situated for conspiring together. *On* is not mentioned hereafter: he probably withdrew from the conspiracy, or took only a very subordinate part in it.

*Took men.* The word "men" is not in the original; and the verb "took" is in the singular number. But it is not uncommon in Hebrew when the verb begins the sentence (as it does here) for it to be in the singular, even when the nominative case which follows is plural. So Gesenius would translate, *And Korah . . . . and Dathan*

*and Abiram . . . . took and rose up against Moses, &c.* Keil and Del. follow Gesenius here. The Jerusalem Targum supplies "counsel" after "took." If this be adopted the translation will be, *And Korah . . . . took counsel apart with Dathan and Abiram, &c.* The Hebrew literally translated is, "And Korah, son of Yizhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, took both Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben; and they rose up," &c. In this way Bp. Patrick, Drs. A. Clarke, Gill, and others construe the verse. It is suggested in the *Speaker's Comm.* that "probably the whole difficulty is due to an after insertion of the mention of Dathan and Abiram, and of their insurrection against Moses, into the original narrative of the sedition of Korah. This narrative would run naturally as follows: 'Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took of the children of Israel two hundred and fifty,' &c. In it, moreover, Korah and his company would be naturally represented as gathering themselves together against Aaron as well as against Moses (ver. 3). But in the expansion of this narrative with a view of making it comprise the

account of the proceedings of Dathan and Abiram, it became important to mark that the outcry of the latter was directed against Moses alone; hence the introduction of the opening words of ver. 2."

Verse 2. *Famous in the congregation.* Keil and Del.: "'Called men of the congregation,' i.e., members of the council of the nation which administered the affairs of the congregation (cf. i. 16)."

*Men of renown.* Keil and Del.: "'Men of name' (see Gen. vi. 4). These two hundred and fifty men appear to have belonged to the other tribes; this is implied in chap. xxvii. 3."

Verse 3. *Ye take too much upon you.* Margin: "It is much for you." Dr. A.

Clarke: "The original is simply רב לכם, 'too much for you.'"

Verse 4. Comp. chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 7. *Ye take too much upon you.* Moses gives back to them their own words, רב לכם.

Verse 9. *Seemeth it but a small thing unto you.* The words, "seemeth it but" are not in the original. Keil and Del. translate, "Is this too little for you?"

Verse 11. "The words of Moses in his wrath are broken. Literally the verse runs: 'Wherefore against the Lord (not against Aaron) thou and all thy company who are gathered together, and Aaron, what is he, that ye murmur against him?' Cf. the parallel reproof of Ananias by St. Peter (Acts v. 3, 4)."  
—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. *A land that floweth with milk and honey.* Thus insolently they apply to Egypt the very words by which Moses had described the Promised Land.

*Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?* Keil and Del.: "That thou wilt be always playing the lord over us?"

Verse 14. *Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men.* Margin as in Heb.: "bore out," or dig out; "i.e., 'blind them to the fact that you keep none of your promises,' equivalent to 'throw dust in their eyes.'"  
—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *The glory of the Lord appeared, &c.* Comp. chap. xiv. 10.

Verse 24. *Tabernacle of Korah.* Heb.: כִּשְׁבֹן, dwelling of Korah.

Verse 29. *Die the common death of all men.* Margin: "Die as every man dieth," i.e., a natural death.

Verse 30. *Make a new thing.* Margin: "Create a creature." בְּרִיאָה בְּרָא, create a creation; i.e., work an

extraordinary miracle: do such a thing as was never done before. So Dr. A. Clarke, Keil and Del. *et al.*

Verse 32. *And all the men that appertained unto Korah.* "Appertained," is not in the original; when that is omitted the A. V. is a literal translation of the Hebrew. This does not mean his children; for it is written, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not" (chap. xxvi. 11); and the celebrated Korahite choir were descendants of his. Keil and Del. say that, "'all the men belonging to Korah,' were his servants." The *Speaker's Comm.*: "All belonging to him who associated themselves with him in this rebellion."

It appears that Korah was not swallowed up with Dathan and Abiram. "Korah himself," says Bishop A. C. Hervey, "was doubtless with the 250 men who bare censers nearer the tabernacle (ver. 19), and perished with them by the 'fire from Jehovah' which accompanied the earthquake. It is nowhere said that he was one of those who 'went down quick into the pit' (comp. Ps. cvi. 17, 18), and it is natural that he should have been with the censor-bearers. That he was so is indeed clearly implied by Num. xvi. 16-19, 35, 40, compared with xxvi. 9, 10." (See a somewhat full and carefully-compiled consideration of this question in Cobbin's *Evangelical Synopsis* on this verse.)

Verse 35. Comp. Lev. x. 1, 2.

Verse 37. *Out of the burning, i.e., from the midst of the men that were burned.*

*Scatter thou the fire yonder, i.e., scatter*



far away the burning coals in the censers.

*They are hallowed.* See the next ver.: "For they offered them before the Lord," &c., and comp. Lev. xxvii. 28.

Verse 38. *Sinners against their own souls, or lives.* Because of their sin their lives had been suddenly cut off. Comp. Prov. xx. 2; Hab. ii. 10.

Verse 45. *And they fell upon their faces.* Comp. vers. 4, 22; and chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 46. *A censor.* "Rather 'the censor;' i.e., that of the High-priest which was used by him on the Great Day of Atonement; cf. Lev. xvi. 12; Heb. ix. 4."—*Speaker's Comm.*

## THE REBELLION OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY.

(Verses 1-7.)

"The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults; but this was a regular conspiracy, headed by persons of consequence, abetted by many of the princes, and favoured by most of the congregation." In endeavouring to expound that portion of the narrative selected as our text, we take two main divisions.

I. The base rebellion of Korah and his company.

1. *The leaders of the rebellion.* "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took both Dathan," &c. Korah was a Levite, engaged in sacred services in connection with the temple and worship of the Lord, and ought therefore to have set an example of loyalty to the rightful rulers. He was also cousin to Moses and Aaron, and he ought to have found in that an additional reason for rendering to them prompt and zealous support. Yet he seems to have been the instigator and leader of the rebellion. Dathan and Abiram were leading men in the tribe of Reuben, who joined Korah in the insurrection. And with them were two hundred and fifty of the most distinguished and influential men of the nation. "A very dangerous conspiracy," says Trapp; "for as in a beast the body follows the head, so in that *bellua multorum capitum*, the multitude. Great men are the looking-glasses of the country, according to which most men dress themselves; their sins do as seldom go unattended as their persons; height of place ever adds two wings to sin, ex-

ample and scandal, whereby it soars higher and flies much further." It is ill with a nation when its leaders are misleaders.

2. *The nature of the rebellion.* It was an organized effort to depose Moses from his position as the head of the civil life, and Aaron from his position as the head of the religious life of the nation. It was "against both magistracy and ministry." The rebels would have equal authority with Moses and Aaron; they would either ascend to the same level as that occupied by the two great chiefs, or they would drag the two chiefs down to their level. In its essential features this rebellion has had many successors. (a)

3. *The cause of the rebellion.* (1) The ostensible cause. "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you," &c. They alleged that Moses and Aaron had usurped the position which they now held and the authority which they wielded. An outrageous assertion when we consider how often the Lord God had manifested His presence with Moses, and used him as the instrument of His power. They also alleged that, as the worshippers of the Lord God, all the congregation were holy, and had, therefore, the right to officiate as priests, and to exercise equal authority with Moses in the government. Their position will not bear examination. It is true that "the whole congregation of Israel were holy in a sense, as being

taken into covenant with God; but that which was a national privilege, shared by the meanest Israelite, gave no claim to the magistracy or the priesthood, which He had bestowed according to His pleasure." There is a sense in which all men are equal before God, yet to some He gives greater abilities and position and authority than to others. But let us mark here two things. First: The tendency of man to seek to justify himself in evil conduct. Korah and his company tried to make their case appear just and good. Men try to justify their evil conduct partly with a view of securing the co-operation, or avoiding the condemnation of others. They do it also in order to quiet their own consciences, by persuading themselves that their course of conduct is reasonable and righteous. But this attempt to justify evil is to add sin to sin. Second: The best of men in this world are liable to reproach and slander. Very few, if indeed any, abler and holier men than Moses have ever lived. And his credentials, as to his being called of God to his high position, were of the clearest and most convincing character; yet he is accused of being a domineering usurper, &c. Count it not a strange thing if you are reviled, &c. Comp. Matt. x. 25. (2) *The real cause.* Envy and ambition seem to have been the root of the rebellion. Korah was envious of Aaron and the priests, Dathan and Abiram envied the tribe of Judah its first rank amongst the tribes, and the two hundred and fifty princes envied Moses because of his place and power. (b) All these men were ambitious of higher rank and wider authority. "Pride, envy, ambition," says Babington, "was in their hearts, and that bred discontentment; discontentment, in-

surrection. If a man should call out all carpenters, none would come but such; but call for all that think themselves wise and able to govern, who will not come?" (c)

## II. The noble conduct of Moses in the rebellion.

"And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face," &c. (vers. 4-7). Notice:

1. *His all-sufficient resource in trouble.* "When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." By prayer he endeavoured to compose his spirit, and sought help of God. The good man may ever seek and obtain direction and help from God by prayer. Comp. Heb. iv. 16; James i. 5.

2. *His sublime confidence in God.* This confidence is manifest in—(1) His bold proposal for settling the question raised by the rebels. "This do, Take ye censers, Korah, and all his company," &c. (vers. 6, 7). Moses must have been directed to this expedient in answer to prayer: he would not have ventured on so daring a measure without the sanction of God. (2) His assurance that God would vindicate both Aaron and himself. "He spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are His," &c. (ver. 6). Moses was convinced of the Divine authority of his own mission and the mission of Aaron, and that God would manifest to all in a manner not to be mistaken that He had chosen and called them to their respective offices.

3. *His calm rebuke of the rebels.* "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." The rebuke was *deserved*. They were leading a most wicked rebellion. The rebuke was *appropriate*. They were impugning the arrangements of the all-wise God: surely that was to take too much upon them.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Democracy, we are all well aware, what is called "self-government" of the multitude by the multitude, is in words the thing everywhere passionately clamoured for at present. Democracy makes rapid progress in these latter times, and ever more rapid, in a perilous

accelerative ratio; towards democracy, and that only, the progress of things is everywhere tending as to the final goal and winning-post. So think, so clamour the multitudes everywhere. And yet all men may see, whose sight is good for much, that in democracy can

He no finality; that with the completest winning of democracy there is nothing yet won,—except emptiness, and the free chance to win! Democracy is, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of zero. When no government is wanted, save that of the parish constable, as in America with its boundless soil, every man being able to find work and recompense for himself, democracy may subsist; not elsewhere, except briefly, as a swift transition toward something other and farther. Democracy never yet, that we heard of, was able to accomplish much work, beyond that same cancelling of itself. Rome and Athens are themes for the schools; unexceptionable for that purpose. In Rome and Athens, as elsewhere, if we look practically, we shall find that it was not by loud voting and debating of many, but by wise insight and ordering of a few, that the work was done. So is it ever, so will it ever be. The French Convention was a Parliament elected “by the five points,” with ballot boxes, universal-suffrages, and what not, as perfectly as Parliament can hope to be in this world; and had indeed a pretty spell of work to do, and did it. The French Convention had to cease from being a free Parliament, and become more arbitrary than any Sultan Bajazet, before it could so much as subsist. It had to purge out its argumentative Girondins, elect its Supreme Committee of *Salut*, guillotine into silence and extinction all that gainsayed it, and rule and work literally by the sternest despotism ever seen in Europe, before it could rule at all. Napoleon was not President of a Republic; Cromwell tried hard to rule in that way, but found that he could not. These, “the armed soldiers of democracy,” had to chain democracy under their feet, and become despots over it, before they could work out the earnest obscure purpose of democracy itself! Democracy, take it where you will in our Europe, is found but as a regulated

method of rebellion and abrogation; it abrogates the old arrangement of things; and leaves, as we say, *Zero* and vacuity for the institution of a new arrangement. It is the consummation of No-government and *Laissez-faire*. It may be natural for our Europe at present; but cannot be the ultimatum of it. Not towards the impossibility, “self-government” of a multitude by a multitude; but towards some possibility, government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle. The blesseddest possibility: not misgovernment, not *Laissez-faire*, but veritable government.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

(b) For Illustrations on Envy see pp. 206-208.

(c) Ambition, that high and glorious passion which makes such havoc among the sons of men, arises from a proud desire of honour and distinction; and when the splendid trappings in which it is usually caparisoned are removed, will be found to consist of the mean materials of envy, pride, and covetousness. It is described by different authors as a gallant madness, a pleasant poison, a hidden plague, a secret poison, a caustic of the soul, the moth of holiness, the mother of hypocrisy, and by crucifying and disquieting all it takes hold of, the cause of melancholy and madness.—*R. Burton*.

The same sun which gilds all nature, and exhilarates the whole creation, does not shine upon disappointed ambition. It is something that rays out of darkness, and inspires nothing but gloom and melancholy. Men in this deplorable state of mind find a comfort in spreading the contagion of their spleen. They find an advantage, too; for it is a general popular error to imagine the loudest complainers for the public to be most anxious for its welfare. If such persons can answer the ends of relief and profit to themselves, they are apt to be careless enough about either the means or the consequences.—*E. Burke*.

### WICKED AMBITION FAITHFULLY REBUKED.

(Verses 8-11.)

Moses now addresses Korah and the other rebellious Levites, probably with a view to convince them of their error and sin before the case should come on for the Divine adjudication. For Moses knew that if their audacious claims were put to the test on the morrow “before the Lord,” as he had proposed, it would be at their dread peril, and that a similar fate to that of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1, 2; chap. iii. 4) would probably befall them. By this remonstrance he seeks to prevent this.

In this appeal Moses makes it clear to Korah that he detected the real motives which actuated him in this movement. The enquiries, “Seek ye the priesthood also?” and “What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?” would leave no doubt on the mind of the leader of the rebels that Moses was cognisant of his real feeling and aims. Notice:—

I. The greatness of the privileges conferred upon the Levites.

“Seemeth it but a small thing unto



you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation," &c. (vers. 9, 10). Matthew Henry's notes are so excellent in themselves and in their arrangement that we cannot do better than quote them. "He reminds them how great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites.

"1. *They were separated from the congregation of Israel*, distinguished from them, dignified above them; instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to have been thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes, though they had been in all respects upon the level with them. Note, It will help to keep us from envying those that are above us duly to consider how many there are below us. Instead of fretting that any are preferred before us in honour, power, estate, or interest, in gifts, graces, or usefulness, we have reason to bless God if we, who are less than the least, are not put among the very last. Many perhaps who deserve better are not preferred so well.

"2. *They were separated to very great and valuable honours.* (1) To draw near to God, nearer than the common Israelites, though they also were a people near unto Him: the nearer any are to God the greater is their honour. (2) To do the service of the tabernacle. It is honour enough to bear the vessels of the sanctuary, and to be employed in any part of the service of the tabernacle. God's service is not only perfect freedom, but high preferment. (3) To stand before the congregation to minister unto them. Note, Those are truly great that serve the public, and it is the honour of God's ministers to be the Church's ministers; nay, which adds to the dignity put upon them.

"3. *It was the God of Israel Himself that separated them.* It was His act and deed to put them into their place, and therefore they ought not to have been discontented; and He it was likewise that put Aaron into his place, and therefore they ought not to have envied him."

II. The unrighteousness of the ambition cherished by them.

Their ambition involved—

1. *The disparagement of their present privileges.* Their privileges "seemed but a small thing unto them." Great as they were, they did not satisfy them. "Ambition," says Trapp, "is restless and unsatisfiable; for, like the crocodile, it grows as long as it lives." And M. Henry: "Those who aspire after and usurp the honours forbidden them put a great contempt upon the honours allowed them." (a)

2. *Interference in the Divine arrangements.* "Seek ye the priesthood also?" It was by the express arrangement and command of God that Aaron and his sons were separated to the duties and emoluments of the priesthood; and, therefore, in seeking the priesthood for themselves, Korah and the Levites who were united with him were endeavouring to set aside the arrangements of the Lord God. Their insatiable ambition had dethroned their judgment, and, for a time, mastered their conscience; it was both unreasonable and unrighteous.

III. The heinousness of the rebellion in which they engaged.

Moses points out to them concerning their rebellion that—

1. *It was unreasonable.* "What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?" The high-priest was merely an instrument in the hand of the Lord. Aaron was not self-appointed. He was a servant called of God to his office, with his duties and his privileges clearly apportioned unto him. How unreasonable, then, was it to murmur at him for being high-priest!

2. *It was exceedingly sinful.* "Thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord." "Those resist the prince who resist those that are commissioned by him." Comp. Matt. x. 40; John xiii. 20; Acts ix. 4.

Conclusion.

1. *Let us crush every rising of ambition which is not in harmony with wisdom*

and righteousness. It is of such that Shakespeare says, and says wisely—

“Fling away ambition :  
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by’t?” (b)

2. Let us seek to give to our ambition  
a righteous and noble direction. (c)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a curtain, but it is lifting, it is lifting, it is lifting; and when it is lifted, what do I see? The spirit world! 'Tis death that lifts the curtain; and when it is lifted, these present things will vanish, for they are but shadows. The world of eternity and reality will then be seen. I would summon a jury of the spirits that have passed that curtain; and they would not be long debating about the question whether Christ is worth the winning. I care not where you select them from—whether from among the condemned in hell, or from among the beatified in heaven. Let them sit—let even those who are in hell sit, and judge upon the matter, and, if they could for once speak honestly, they would tell you that it is a dreadful thing to despise Christ; now that they have come to see things in a true light—now that they are lost for ever—now that they are crushed with knowledge and feeling which have come too late to be profitable—now they wish that they had listened to the ministrations of truth, to the proclamations of the Gospel. Ah! if they could have a sane mind back again, they would shriek, “Oh! for one more Sabbath. Oh! to listen once more to an honest preacher, though his words might be clumsy and uncouth. Oh! to hear a voice once more say, ‘Come to Jesus while the day of mercy lasts.’ Oh! to be once more pressed to come to the marriage feast—once more bidden to look to Jesus and to live!” I tell you, sirs, some of you who make so light of Sundays, and think preaching is but a pastime, so that you come here to hear us as you would go to hear some fiddler on a week-night—I tell you, sirs, the lost in hell reckon these things at a very different rate, and so will you ere long, when another preacher, with skeleton fingers, shall talk to you upon your death-bed. Ah! then you will see that we were in earnest and you were the players, and you will comprehend that what we said to you demanded earnest, immediate attention, though, alas! you would not give it, and so played false to your own soul, and committed spiritual suicide, and went your way like a bullock to the slaughter, to be the murderers of your own spirits.—C. H. Spurgeon.

(b) How, like a mounting devil in the heart,  
Rules the unrein'd ambition! Let it once

“The true ambition there alone resides,  
Where justice vindicates, and wisdom guides;  
Where inward dignity joins outward state,  
Our purpose good as our achievement great;  
Where public blessings public praise attend,  
Where glory is our motive, not our end.  
Wouldst thou be famed? Have those high  
acts in view;  
Brave men would act, though scandal would  
ensue.”—E. Young.

But play the monarch, and its haughty  
brow  
Glow with a beauty that bewilders  
thought  
And unthrones peace for ever. Putting  
on  
The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns  
The heart to ashes, and with not a spring  
Left in the bosom for the spirit's lip  
We look upon our splendour and forget  
The thirst for which we perish.  
N. P. Willis.

(c) There are few men who are not ambitions of distinguishing themselves in the nation or country where they live, and of growing considerable with those with whom they converse. There is a kind of grandeur and respect which the meanest and most insignificant part of mankind endeavour to procure in the little circle of their friends and acquaintance. The poorest mechanic, nay, the man who lives upon common alms, gets him his set of admirers, and delights in that superiority which he enjoys over those who are in some respects beneath him. This ambition which is natural to the soul of man, might, methinks, receive a very happy turn; and, if it were rightly directed, contribute as much to a person's advantage as it generally does to his uneasiness and disquiet.—J. Addison.

“Ambition is the vice of noble souls!”  
If 'tis a vice, then let those souls beware,  
Thrice noble though they be, and passing  
fair  
In the world's eye, and high upon the scrolls,  
Her favour'd minions where the world enrolls,  
Lest it conduct to shame! Be thine the  
care,  
Soldier of Christ, that nobler strife to dare,  
Which the rash spirit of the world controls,  
And makes ambition virtue! Be it thine  
To win thy bright unfading diadem  
By works of love! Around his brows shall  
shine  
In heaven from glory's source the purest  
beam,  
Whose aspect here, with beauty most divine,  
Reflects the image of the GOOD SUPREME.  
Ep. Mant.  
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## THE SIN OF USURPING THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

(Verse 10.)

"Seek ye the priesthood also?"

The Papists say that Korah, Dathan and Abiram are like unto Protestants, and that as they perished for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron so Protestants for leaving "the Catholic Church," as they call it, will perish for ever in hell. But High Church clergy and writers of like kind compare Korah and his company to the Dissenters; they say that like as Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron, so Dissenters presuming to have preachers of their own establish a mock ministry different from that which has the apostolic commission. What a perverting of the truth! So far from it being true that Protestants or Dissenters are shadowed forth, it is not difficult to perceive rather that it shadows forth themselves. What was the crime of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? It was an attempt to put themselves in the place of Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron were mediators between God and Israel, and therefore types of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moses as lawgiver and Aaron as priest were types of Jesus; their office was sacred and peculiar to themselves; no man could, with God's permission, perform the duties of their office but themselves. No man on any consideration was to usurp the office of priest; no, not even Jesus Christ Himself, as you see in Heb. v. 4, 5. So sacred was the office of priest that not even Jesus Himself might take it until called to it by God Himself. This was the very crime of Korah and his company . . . . Now what is the conduct of the Papists and of High Church clergy? Is it more like the conduct of Korah and his company, or is that of Dissenters or Protestants more like it? Surely, it requires very little sense to see which are like unto Korah and his company. High Churchmen say that *they are priests*, that they offer sacrifices, that in the Supper of the Lord they

really do present the body of Christ to God, that they are sacrificing priests between God and the people; this is the great point which they maintain. Whereas there is known in the Bible but *one* priest, in that sense, in the present dispensation, namely Jesus, the great High Priest, who has gone to appear in the presence of God to present His sacrifice and offer His intercession. He carries the blood and presents the incense on behalf of His Church.

The wickedness of claiming to be a priest is seen more plainly when we consider the effect of it; it is absolutely to set Jesus Christ aside, and shut a man out from salvation. This illustration very plainly shows this. Notice, first, that the priest offered the blood of the sacrifice; and what was that blood offered for? It was God's chosen means whereby He would avert punishment and deliver from danger. If they had done wrong and provoked Him to punish them, or if they were brought in the providential dealings of God, into danger of enemies or other evil; if they shed the blood of the sacrifice and presented it before the mercy seat, or at the altar, it would be accepted, judgment averted, and evil removed. That was the *national* character of the Jewish religion; "without shedding of blood there was no remission;" and national mercies were given in consequence of their observing their national rites, and national evils were removed because of the offering of that blood. But, mark, the priest alone was to offer it; it would have been in vain if any other man had attempted to present the blood, God would not have accepted it, and the punishment would have been poured out. It was the priest who confessed the sins of the people and presented the sacrifice, and then mercy was vouchsafed. Now, what was done by the priest for Israel is what is now actually done by our High Priest for the Church. Observe how it is asserted that one was



typical of the other (Heb. x. 11, 12). Thus you see Christ is both priest and victim, as it is again in Heb. ix. 11, 12. How great then the office of Christ! . . . How awful the iniquity for any miserable man calling himself a priest to thrust Christ aside, and take upon himself the very work which here we read in God's holy Word Jesus is exalted to heaven to carry on!

Again observe, under the Old Testament law, the priest offered the incense also; it was not acceptable to God if offered by any other man. Christ's intercession was typified by the burning incense going up in a cloud of smoke together with the prayers and praises of the people; and no man might offer that except the priest. In like manner it is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who intercedes in the presence of God for His people (Rom. viii. 34). Hence we offer prayer "through Jesus Christ our Lord," "through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Just as under the old law no man might offer incense himself but must give it to the priest, so in this

dispensation no prayer is acceptable to God but by and through Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." How great then the wickedness of those who would presume to put themselves in the place of Christ, the great High Priest, and say that they are mediators through whom the prayers of the people are to be offered! What says the Holy Ghost again on this point of incense by the mouth of the beloved Apostle? 1 John ii. 1. . . . It may be well indeed that ministers should pray for their people, and people for their ministers; but it is *not* well that ministers should pretend to put themselves as mediators between God and the people, and represent themselves as successors of the Jewish High Priests; in a word, supplanting Jesus Christ Himself; this is not well.

### Application.

*Trust to the only Priest.* Have confidence in that Man who because "He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood."—*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*

## AUDACITY IN WICKEDNESS.

(Verses 12-15.)

Having finished his address to Korah and the Levites, Moses sent messengers to Dathan and Abiram, who during that address seems to have departed to their own tents, to call them to appear before him. With outrageous insolence they not only refused to obey his summons, but preferred the most unjust and impudent charges against him. *Their audacity in wickedness is manifest—*

I. In their defiance of the authority of the ruler appointed by God.

They absolutely and daringly refused to obey the summons of Moses. Twice they said, "We will not come up." "They denied his power," says Gill, "despised his authority, and would not obey his orders, and therefore refused to come up to the tabernacle, or to the tent of Moses, or to the Court of Judicature, wherever it was; perhaps the first is best." "Sturdy rebels," says

Trapp, "ripe for destruction." See Prov. xxix. 1.

II. In their reviling the ruler appointed by God.

They proceed to charge Moses with—

1. *Having injured them in their circumstances.* "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey? . . . Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards." The statement concerning Egypt was not truthful. Moreover, as Bp. Patrick observes, "nothing could be more insolent and ungrateful than to describe Egypt in the very same language in which God had often spoken of the Land of Promise." Their deliverance from Egypt, instead of being resented as an injury, should have been regarded by them as



a priceless blessing. And whose fault was it that they were not in possession of the Promised Land? They charge Moses with that for which they alone were to blame.

2. *Attempting to tyrannise over them.* "Thou make thyself altogether a prince over us." They speak as though Moses were in the habit of lording it over them as a usurping tyrant, when he was really devoting himself to their service.

3. *Endeavouring to deceive them.* "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?" They insinuate that Moses was trying to blind the congregation as to the true character of his doings and designs.

4. *Aiming at their destruction.* "Thou hast brought us . . . to kill us in the wilderness." Farther than this injustice and falsehood surely cannot go. If they were doomed to fall in the wilderness it was because of former rebellions of their own. As for Moses he had sought their good, and only their good. Is not the audacity of their wickedness terrible?

III. In the solemn appeal to God which their conduct called forth from the ruler which He had appointed.

"And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering," &c. Notice:

1. *His righteous anger.* "Moses was very wroth." Anger is not always sinful. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There are times when it would be a sin not to be angry. There is a deep principle of wrath in the Divine nature. Our Lord looked upon the wicked Pharisees "with anger" (Mark iii. 5). In proportion as we regard holiness with affection we must regard wickedness with indignation. There is much in this world at present to awaken wrath in godly souls. The anger of Moses was a righteous thing: it was the antagonism of his pure and noble soul against the base wickedness of Dathan and Abiram. (a)

2. *His truthful self-vindication.* "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." "Moses was not one of them," says Trapp, "that follow the administration of justice as a trade only, with an

unquenchable and unconscionable desire of gain. This is but robbery with authority, and justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, whereto while the sheep flies for defence in weather, he is sure to lose part of his fleece." Moses could truthfully appeal to the Lord that although he was their ruler he had taken no tribute whatever from them or oppressed them in any way or degree. Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 3.

3. *His solemn prayer.* "Moses said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering." Comp. Gen. iv. 4, 5. It may at first sight appear that in this request Moses manifests an unworthy spirit. But really "he craveth of God no more than to show and make manifest his own innocency and uprightness, which was to be decided by that offering."

Lessons.

1. *That man, having entered upon an evil course, unless arrested by some restraining force, proceeds to greater daring in and deeper depths of wickedness.* So Dathan and Abiram grew bold and insolent in sin. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," &c. Character is never stationary. It grows either towards perfection or towards perdition. In the case of the wicked their dread progress in wickedness is not difficult of explanation. (1) The heart becomes hardened; less susceptible to good influences; less amenable to conscience, &c. (b) (2) The propensity to evil increases in power. As the soul falls the momentum with which it falls increases. (3) The circumstances into which they bring themselves by sin urge them onward. One sin seems to make other sins necessary. Shakespeare clearly expresses the idea in *Macbeth*—

"I am in blood  
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er." (c)

Guard against entering on wicked, or even questionable, courses.

2. *The best of men are liable to the vilest misrepresentations.* There was not the shadow of reason for these

charges against Moses. He was the last man to play the lord over any people. "Those often fall under the heaviest censures who have merited the highest applause."

3. *The good man when suffering from misrepresentation can carry his cause to the Great Vindicator.* Moses appealed to God from the misrepresentations of Dathan and Abiram. So did Job from

the false charges of his "miserable comforters." So did David from the slanders of his enemies. Comp. Job xvi. 19; xxiii. 10-12. So may we when falsely accused. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth Thy righteousness as the light, and Thy judgment as the noon-day."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a great difference between the sin of one who is angry, and the cruelty of one who holds another in hatred. For even with our children are we angry; but who is ever found to hate his children? Among the very cattle, too, the cow, in a sort of weariness, will sometimes in anger drive away her suckling calf; but anon she embraces it with all the affection of a mother. She is in a way disgusted with it when she butts it; yet, when she misses it, she will seek after it. Nor do we discipline our children otherwise than with a degree of anger and indignation; yet we should not discipline them at all but in love to them.

So far, then, is every one who is angry from hating, that sometimes one would be rather convicted of hating if he were not angry; for suppose a child wishes to play in some river's stream, by whose force he would be like to perish. If you see this and patiently suffer it, this would be hating—your patient suffering him in his death. How far better is it to be angry and correct him, than by not being angry to suffer him to perish! Great is the difference, indeed, between one's exceeding due limits in some words through anger, which he afterwards wipes off by repenting of it, and the keeping an insidious purpose shut up in the heart.—*Augustine.*

There is an anger that is damnable: it is the anger of selfishness. There is an anger that is majestic as the frown of Jehovah's brow: it is the anger of truth and love. If man meets with injustice, it is not required that he shall not be roused to meet it; but if he is angry after he has had time to think upon it, that is sinful. The flame is not wrong, but the coals are.—*H. W. Beecher.*

High and gusty passions that sweep through the soul are sometimes like fierce summer storms that cleanse the air, and give the earth refreshment by strong winds and down-pelting rains. Men are better for knowing how to be angry, provided the sun does not go down on their wrath, and provided it is justified by the occasions of it.—*Ibid.*

(b) Wilful disobedience to God's commands tends most powerfully to harden the heart; for after we have once disobeyed, it becomes more easy to repeat the disobedience. But

this is not all. If you disobey, you must assign some excuse to justify your disobedience, or your conscience will reproach you, and render you uneasy; if no plausible excuse occurs, you will seek one; if none can readily be found, you will invent one. And when God proceeds to enforce His commands by frowns and threatenings, and to press you with motives and arguments, you must fortify your minds against their influence, and seek other arguments to assist you in doing it. This also tends most powerfully to harden the heart. A man who is frequently employed in seeking arguments and excuses to justify his neglect of religion, soon becomes expert in the work of self-justification. He is, if I may so express it, armed at all points against the truth; so that in a little time, nothing affects him, no arrow from the quiver of revelation can reach his conscience. Urge him to what duty you will, he has some plausible excuse in readiness to justify himself for neglecting to perform it. But if, as is sometimes the case, his excuses prove insufficient, and his understanding and conscience become convinced that he ought to hear God's voice to-day, he can avoid compliance only by taking refuge in an obstinate refusal, or by resolutely diverting his attention to some other object, till God's commands are forgotten, or by a vague kind of promise that he will become religious at some future period. Whichever of these methods he adopts, the present impression is effaced, and his heart is hardened. He has engaged in a warfare with his reason and conscience, and has gained a victory over them. He has resisted the force of truth, and thus rendered it more easy for him to resist it again. In a word, he has less religious sensibility; he has become more inaccessible to conviction, and less disposed to yield to it than before.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(c) It is somewhere fabled in ancient literature that a certain stag and horse were at variance; they battled for some time fiercely with each other. At length the strength of the horse failed him, and he sought the help of a man. The man complies, gets on his back, and chases the stag to death. So far the noble steed overcame the difficulty of his position, and gained his point; but the very

means he adopted placed him in a far worse position afterwards. With a bit in his mouth and saddle on his back, he continued to the end of his days the slave of the man whose assistance he obtained. It is thus with those who seek to overcome a difficulty or avoid a danger by recourse to immoral expedients. This, alas! is often done. In business a man contracts obligations. He finds that his credit, reputation, and position are in danger unless they are fully met. The hour comes

when those obligations heavily press upon him. He struggles honourably with them for a time. At length he gives way, and has recourse to forgeries, falsehoods, or some other wicked device. For the moment he seems to succeed; but the immorality he called in to serve him for the hour becomes his master and his tyrant, uses him as the man did the horse in the fable—as a wretched beast of burden, the victim of the bit, the saddle, and the spur.—*The Clerical Year Book.*

## THE REBELLION MAINTAINED IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF GOD.

(Verses 16-22).

Consider:—

I. The test proposed by Moses to the rebels.

“And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord,” &c. (vers. 16, 17). Moses here repeats the challenge which he had previously made (vers. 5-7), with this addition, he states that Aaron also shall be there, and submit to the test. The test includes three clauses, or articles.

1. *That Korah and his company shall assemble at the tabernacle and burn incense.* This was a function reserved to the priesthood: they had claimed equality with the priesthood: thus let their claim be put to proof.

2. *That they should burn incense in sight of God.* All things transpire beneath His eye (Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13); but Moses gives special prominence to the fact that the trial of their claims was to take place “before the Lord.” In this renewal of the challenge he twice mentions this solemn fact (vers. 16, 17). Will they dare the awful experiment in His holy presence?

3. *That they should burn incense in the sight of God with a view to His interposition for the settlement of the question which they had raised.* This was the great object which they had in view in this business, and was clearly stated by Moses when he first proposed this method of testing their claims. Truly a very serious, and indeed awful proposal. How will the rebels treat it?

II. The test accepted by the rebels.

On the morrow “they took every man

his censer, and put fire in them,” &c. (vers. 18, 19). Notice:

1. *The awful presumption involved in their conduct.* It was but recently that they had witnessed Nadab and Abihu burnt to death by fire from the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, and yet they presume with unconsecrated hands and in a rebellious spirit to burn incense in the door of the tabernacle before the Lord. Terrible is their sinful hardihood! (a)

2. *The infatuation of Korah in sin.* He “gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” He seems entirely confident of success. Not a grain of prudence seems left to him. *Quos Deus vult perdere dementat prius.* “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

III. The interposition of the Lord God.

“And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake,” &c. (vers. 19-21). The interposition of the Lord was characterised by—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* “The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation.” (See notes on chap. xiv. 10, p. 248.)

2. *The declaration of His judgment.* He called upon Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation that He “may consume them in a moment.” By rallying to the tabernacle at the call of Korah the people had made common cause with the rebels



and become sharers in their guilt, and God threatens to destroy them instantly.

3. *His care for His faithful servants.* He "spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation," &c. Excellent are the notes of Trapp on this: "Good men are taken away from the evil to come. When God pulls away the pillars, what will become of the building? Lot was no sooner taken out of Sodom, but Sodom was taken out of the world." Comp. Gen. xix. 22-25. (b)

IV. The intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation.

"And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God," &c. (ver. 22).

1. *Its object.* The aim of the intercession of Moses and Aaron was to avert the threatened destruction of all the congregation.

2. *Its pleas.* These are—(1) The relationship of God to man. "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh." God is the creator and sustainer of human life. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "The Father

of spirits." Will He not then have mercy upon these misguided spirits, of which He was the author and preserver? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth," &c. (Psa. ciii. 13-18). "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands." Comp. Isa. lxiv. 8, 9. (c). (2) The justice of God. "Shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?" As compared with Korah, the author of the rebellion, the great multitude of the people were almost innocent. Would God sweep them all away in the same judgment? Comp. Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

Mark the magnanimity of Moses and Aaron in thus interceding for the people. The people were ever ready to join in any rebellion against their leaders, yet those leaders were ever ready to entreat God for them. "The good man," says a Hindoo epigram, "goes not upon enmity, but rewards with kindness the very being who injures him. So the sandal-wood while it is felling, imparts to the edge of the axe its aromatic savour."

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a farther and a farther invasion upon the person encroached upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and with a running progress carries a venom and a contagion all over the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. If Cæsar comes once to pass the Rubicon, he will be sure to march farther on, even till he enters the very bowels of Rome, and breaks open the Capitol itself. He that wades so far as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes farther. — *Robert South, D.D.*

(b) "No doubt," said the Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, "I have met with trials as well as others, yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if He were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother and yet never missed them.'"—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

(c) The Creator is faithful. He abides by His creation, neither deserting, nor repudi-

ating it. Though nature has become a mad-house of fierce passions and deadly strife, His devotion to it knows no abatement. He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has put down all evil, and established righteousness, even "everlasting righteousness." "A faithful Creator" involves the idea of a tender Redeemer.—*John Pulsford.*

God never loses sight of any one thing He has created, and no created thing can continue either to be, or to act independently of Him. His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woful suffering, is now at ease, because He at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever-changing history. When I walk by the way-side, He is along with me. When I enter into



company, amid all my forgetfulness of Him, He never forgets me. In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of Him who never slumbers is upon me. I cannot fly from His presence. Go where I will, He tends me, and watches

me, and cares for me; and the same Being who is now at work in the remotest domains of nature and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings and of all my faculties.—*Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*

### THE SPIRIT AND THE SOVEREIGN OF MAN.

(Verse 22.)

"The God of the spirits of all flesh."

These words suggest three considerations.

I. The grand distinction of human nature.

The glory of human nature is not in anything physical, *e.g.*, the upright form, the steady and penetrating glance of the eye, &c.; but in the fact of its spirituality. Man is a spirit in a vesture of flesh. "There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

(a). Concerning the human spirit consider—

1. *Its attributes.* (1) *Unity.* The body is composed of an indefinite number of separate and separable parts. But the spirit is one and indivisible. We are conscious of our individuality as thinking, feeling, acting beings. (2) *Voluntary activity.* Bodies have no power of spontaneous motion; being at rest, they will remain so for ever, unless acted upon by some power which is not inherent. But the spirit acts independently; man is gifted with volition, he chooses and rejects, &c. (3) *Thought.* The body does not think; after the death of the body the brain may remain perfect, but it does not reflect. But the spirit thinks, reflects, compares, judges. How wonderful is this power! and how great and glorious are its achievements! (4) *Sensation.* It is not the mere body which feels: when life has departed from it you may subject the body to any treatment whatsoever, but you will not discover in it any sign of sensation. But the spirit feels: it is capable of the deepest, intensest misery, and of the most exquisite and unspeakable joy.

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(5) *Religiousness.* Bodies are incapable of admiration or veneration; but spirits have capabilities of worship and an instinct or instincts for worship. By his very nature man is a worshipper; his spirit wonders, admires, loves, adores. How great, then, are the capacities and faculties of the human spirit! Moreover the spirit *acts without weariness*. The bodily organs through which in our present state it acts are speedily tired, but the spirit seems untiring in its activities. And further, it appears to be *capable of indefinite growth and progress*. All the material forms of life with which we are acquainted advance and grow to a certain point, and then begin to decay. But the spirit seems to possess innate capabilities for never-ending growth. How wonderful and sacred are our spirits, possessing, as they do, such attributes as these!

2. *Its relationships.* It is related—

(1) *To angels.* With holy angels it has relations. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" These holy and heavenly spirits minister to human spirits upon earth. The human spirit has relations with evil angels also. We are one with them in the fact that we are rebellious spirits. These evil angels act malignantly on human spirits; they tempt them to sin; they seek their utter and irretrievable ruin. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers," &c. (Eph. vi. 12). "The prince of the power of

the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (2) *To God.* "God is a Spirit." "The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zech. xii. 1). He is "the Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9). "We are also His offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh." We were created in His image. His great redemptive purpose is to renew us into His image again. We may receive communications from Him; may commune with Him; may be "workers together with Him"; may participate in His joy, &c. We are called into this high fellowship through Jesus Christ. He restores the human spirit to those relations to God which sin had ruptured. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." How exalted and august are these relations of the human spirit to God!

3. *Its destiny.* At death the body "shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." From the body the spirit passes into the presence of God as the great Judge; and from His presence it passes to its own place of retribution, either to the Paradise of God or to the prison of the lost. (b)

Here, then, is the grand distinction of man that he is spirit with such wondrous faculties, &c. Amongst all God's works in this world he stands alone in this; for if we allow a spiritual principle to animals it is greatly and obviously inferior to the human spirit.

Man reverence thy spirit—reverence thyself!

**II. The supreme Sovereign of human nature.**

"The God of the spirits of all flesh." God's relations of Creator and Sustainer of man were most probably present to the mind of Moses in this appeal. We have already spoken of Him as the Creator of spirits. He is also their Sustainer. "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job xii. 10). "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25). His sovereignty over human spirits rests upon these re-

lations which He sustains to them, and it is manifest:—

1. *In the claims which He makes upon the human spirit.* He requires the sincere worship and the supreme affection of man: He claims the throne of our being. Comp. Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12; Ezek. xviii. 4; Luke x. 27.

2. *In the power which He exercises over the human spirit.* We have seen that He is its Creator; and its departure from this world is in His hands. He summons the spirit hence when He pleases. Comp. Job xiv. 5, 20; Eccles. viii. 8; Rev i. 18.

**III. The inspiring hope of human nature.**

Because God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" Moses was encouraged to plead with Him that He would not destroy "all the congregation" because of the rebellion of Korah and his company. For the creatures whom He has created and whom He sustains He must have a kind regard. Towards the spirits of which He is the Father He must be gracious and merciful. "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job xiv. 15). Comp. Psa. ciii. 13-18; cxxxviii. 8; Isa. lxix. 8, 9.

From the relations which He sustains to our spirits we have a good hope that He will ever deal graciously with us. Comp. Lam. iii. 31-33.

Should we not leave the future destinies of men (about which so many minds are now much exercised) calmly and confidently to "the God of the spirits of all flesh"? It is absolutely certain that He will deal righteously and kindly with His creatures in this and in all things.

### Conclusion.

Realise the greatness and dignity of your being. You are a spirit, created in the image of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and destined for immortality. The time comes on apace when you will realise the unspeakable importance of your spirit. Let your great concern be to secure its well-being. (c)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) To say there is no such thing as matter would be a much less absurd inference, than to say there is no such thing as mind. The very act of inferring, as we do by reasoning, that the object which effects our senses exists apart from ourselves, is wholly incapable of giving us any knowledge of the object's existence, without, at the same time, giving us a knowledge of our own that is, of the mind's existence. An external necessarily implies an internal. That there may be anything beyond or without, there must necessarily be something beyond or without which it is said to exist. That there may be a body which we feel abiding separate from us, namely our own body, one part of which gives us sensations through another part, there must be a *WE*, an *US*, that is, a *MIND*. If we have a right to call spirit, or soul, or mind, a mere negation of the qualities of matter; surely this might just as well be retorted by saying that matter is only a negation of the qualities of mind. But in truth the materialists cannot stir one step without the aid of that mind whose existence they deny. . . . The truth is that we believe in the existence of matter because we cannot help it. The inferences of our reason from our sensations impel us to this conclusion; and the steps are few and short by which we reach it. But the steps are fewer and shorter, and of the self-same nature, which lead us to believe in the existence of mind; for of that we have the evidence within ourselves, and wholly independent of our senses. Nor can we ever draw the inference, in any one instance, of the existence of matter, without, at the same time, exhibiting a proof of the existence of mind; for we are, by the supposition, reasoning, inferring, drawing a conclusion, forming a belief; therefore, there exists somebody, something, to reason, to infer, to conclude, to believe; that is, *WE*, not any fraction of matter, but a reasoning, inferring, believing being; in other words, a *MIND*. If scepticism can have any place in our system, assuredly it relates to the existence of matter, far more than of mind.—*Lord Brougham*.

(b) Nothing is more difficult than to realise that every man has a distinct soul—that every one of all the millions who live or have lived, is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. To explain what I mean, . . . When we read history, we meet with accounts of great slaughters and massacres, great pestilences, famines, conflagrations, and so on; and we are accustomed to regard collections of people as single individuals. We cannot understand that a multitude is a collection of immortal souls. I say immortal souls. Each of those multitudes not only *had*, while he was upon earth, but has a soul, which did in its own time but return to God who gave it, and not perish, and which now lives unto Him. All those millions upon millions of human beings

who ever trod the earth, and saw the sun successively, are at this moment in existence all together. Every one of those souls still lives. They had their separate thoughts and feelings when on earth; they have them now. They had their likings and pursuits, they gained what they thought good, and enjoyed it; and they still somewhere or other live, and what they then did in the flesh surely has its influence upon their present destiny. They live, reserved for a day which is to come, when all nations shall stand before God. . . . All the names we see written on monuments in churches or churchyards; all the writers whose names and works we see in our libraries; all the workmen who raised the great buildings far and near, which are the wonder of the world, they are all in God's remembrance—they all live.

Moreover, every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth, is in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another that one is the subject of God's favour, and the other under His wrath; the one in the way to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and is true of the living also. All are tending one way or the other; there is no middle or neutral state for any one, though as far as the sight of the external world goes, all men seem to be in a middle state common to one and all. Yet, much as men look the same, and impossible as it is for us to say where each man stands in God's sight, there are two, and but two, classes of men, and these have characters and destinies as far apart in their tendencies as light and darkness. This is the case even of those who are in the body, and it is much more true of those who have passed into the unseen state.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(c) Endeavour then, my brethren, to realize that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavour to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge them as He judges. Pass a very few years, and you will actually experience what as yet you are called on to believe. There will be no need of the effort of mind to which I invite you. When you have passed into the unseen state, there will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world, when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God, and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the Judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left? How poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the infinite aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable! O, my brethren! let the thought be upon you day by day, especially when you are



tempted to sin. Avoid sin as a serpent; it looks and promises well; it bites afterwards. It is dreadful in memory, dreadful even on earth; but in that awful period, when the fever of life is over, and you are waiting in silence for the Judgment, with nothing to distract your thoughts, who can say how dreadful may be the memory of sins done in the body? Then the very apprehension of their punishment, when Christ shall suddenly visit, will doubtless outweigh a thousandfold their gratification, such as it was, which you

felt in committing them; and if so, what will be the proportion between it and that punishment, if, after all, it be actually inflicted? Let us lay to heart our Saviour's own most merciful words. "Be not afraid," He says, "of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."—*Ibid.*

## THE PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT.

(Verses 23-30.)

In this section of the narrative we have the final steps before the infliction of punishment upon the rebels.

I. The complete separation of the people from the rebels.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," &c. (vers. 23-27). In these instructions we have—

1. *A manifestation of the justice of God.* In his intercession Moses had pleaded the justice of God; and this is the Divine answer to his prayer. God will not consume all the congregation because of the sin of a portion of that congregation. "All His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." "The just Lord will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not." (a)

2. *An illustration of the peril of evil associations.* The people that were in the immediate neighbourhood of the rebels were in danger of sharing their dread fate. "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men," &c. (ver. 26). Lot's residence in Sodom well nigh ruined him. Jehoshaphat's partnership with the wicked Ahaziah ended in disaster (2 Chron. xx. 35-37). "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." (b)

3. *An illustration of the necessity of human effort in the attainment of salvation.* If the people would avoid the doom of Dathan and Abiram they must

hasten away from the tents of those wicked men. Lot had to make a speedy departure from Sodom. If the sinner would be saved from the punishment and power of sin, he must "flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him." (c)

The people obeyed the word of the Lord spoken by Moses: "They gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side." The instinct of self-preservation would urge them to swift compliance with the Divine instructions. Thus the rebels and their families were separated from the rest of the people.

II. The final statement concerning the decision of the question which the rebels had raised.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me," &c. (vers. 28-30). It has been well said by Dr. Kitto: "From the beginning of the world unto this day, no man ever made so bold and noble an assertion of Divine approval, or subjected his claims in the presence of a nation to a test so immediate and so infallible." And Matthew Henry: "The judgment itself would have been proof enough of God's displeasure against the rebels, and would have given all men to 'understand that they had provoked the Lord'; but when it was thus solemnly foretold and appealed to by Moses beforehand, when there was not the least previous indication of it from without, the convincing evidence of it was much the stronger, and it was put

beyond dispute that he was not only a servant but a favourite of Heaven, who was so intimately acquainted with the Divine counsels, and could obtain such extraordinary appearances of the Divine power in his vindication." How extraordinary and sublime was the confidence of Moses in all this! Calmly he makes this remarkably bold declaration, and leaves the issue in the hands of the Lord God. He knew well that he was not seeking his own in any respect; that his great aim was to promote the glory of God in the service to which He had appointed him; and, therefore, he could confidently leave the issue with his great Lord.

III. The final opportunity afforded to the rebels of turning from their evil course.

The warning which was given to the people to separate themselves from the tents of the rebels, and the final statement of Moses as to the settlement of the question in dispute, afforded the rebels another opportunity of desisting from their re-

bellion, acknowledging the authority of their rightful leaders, &c. The Lord is slow to anger. He affords to the greatest sinners many opportunities of turning from their sin, before He smites them in wrath. The Divine mercy in this case is the more conspicuous, inasmuch as Dathan and Abiram having refused to go to Moses and the elders, Moses and the elders go to them. Dathan and Abiram may yet be saved if they will. How great is the long-suffering of God! (d)

IV. The persistent and terrible audacity of the rebels.

"Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." "As outfacing Moses," says Trapp, "and scorning the judgment threatened. Hardened sinners make no more of God's dreadful threatenings than Behemoth doth of iron weapons, which he esteemeth as straws." "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here we open the Bible, in which we find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which enjoyed a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. The heathen are a law unto themselves. Five talents are expected to produce more than two. The Divine plan of judgment, therefore, is not arbitrary, but moral. If we lose hold of this principle, we shall see confusion where we might see the order of righteousness. First of all, and last of all, it must be our settled and unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or He is no longer God. Everything must perish which opposes this law. We are not, however, to look at incomplete cases, and regard them as final criteria by which to test the wisdom and righteousness of the Almighty. In many cases we shall have to repress our impatience, and calmly to wait until fuller light is granted. —Joseph Parker, D.D.

(b) Be cautious with whom you associate, and never give your company or your confidence to persons of whose good principles you are not certain. No person that is an enemy to God can be a friend to man. He that has already proved himself ungrateful to the Author of every blessing, will not scruple, when

it will serve his turn, to shake off a fellow-workman like himself. He may render you instrumental to his own purposes, but he will never benefit you. A bad man is a curse to others; as he is secretly, notwithstanding all his boasting and affected gaiety, a burden to himself. Shun him as you would a serpent in your path. Be not seduced by his rank, his wealth, his wit, or his influence. Think of him as already in the grave; think of him as standing before the everlasting God in judgment. This awful reality will instantly strip off all that is now so imposing, and present him in his true light, the object rather of your compassion and of your prayers than of your wonder and imitation. —Bp. Coleridge.

(c) If a man knew that the ship in which he and his family were sailing, and which contained all his property, was leaking day and night, do you suppose he would be careless about it? Would he not be constantly baling out the water lest it should sink the vessel with its precious freight? If a man understood that a spark from the flue of the furnace had set fire to the timber of his dwelling, and that, smothered, it was creeping along and charring the wainscoting and partition, do you suppose he would content himself merely with saying, "I have no doubt that this house is on fire, and that it is dangerous?" Would

he not *do* something? Many men read the Bible, and say, "My dear children, we are all sinful; we are sold in sin; may God lead us out of our sinfulness, and draw us toward Him!" and yet put forth no effort to reform their lives. Meanwhile their sinfulness increases, and envelops them and consumes them. Thousands and thousands of men have died in that way, and been utterly destroyed. If a man is wise, no sooner does he have the slightest intimation that there is fire threatening the destruction of his house and all that are in it, than he calls for men, and sets them to work to put an end to the mischief. And when a man is touched by the Spirit of God, and he is made conscious that the fires of hell are in him, with what earnestness does he enter upon a course of repentance! How does he say, "God have mercy on me. Help me; teach me; lead me!"—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) He doth often give warning of judgments, that He might not pour out His wrath. He summons them to a surrender of themselves, and a return from their rebellion, that they might not feel the force of His arms. He offers peace before He shakes off the dust of His feet, that His despised peace might not return in vain to Him to solicit a revenge from His anger. He hath a right to punish the first commission of a crime, but He warns

men of what they have deserved, of what His justice moves Him to inflict, that by having recourse to His mercy He might not exercise the rights of His justice. God threatens Nineveh, by the prophet, with destruction, that Nineveh's repentance might make void the prophecy. He fights with men by the sword of His mouth, that He might not pierce them by the sword of His wrath. He threatens, that men might prevent the execution of His threatening; He terrifies, that He might not destroy, but that men by humiliation might lie prostrate before Him, and move the bowels of His mercy to a louder sound than the voice of His anger. He takes time to whet His sword, that men may turn themselves from the edge of it. He roars like a lion, that men, by hearing His voice, may shelter themselves from being torn by His wrath. There is patience in the sharpest threatening, that we may avoid the scourge. Who can charge God with an eagerness to revenge, that sends so many heralds and so often before He strikes, that He might be prevented from striking? His threatenings have not so much of a black flag as of an olive branch. He lifts up His hand before He strikes that men might see it and avert the stroke (Isa. xxvi. 11).—*Charnock.*

## THE DUTY OF SEPARATION FROM THE WICKED.

(Verse 26.)

The statement of this duty needs to be very guarded.

This duty is different from the self-righteousness of the Pharisee described by our Lord in Luke xviii. 11, 12. Comp. Isa. lrv. 5.

This duty is not binding as regards the legitimate transactions of business with wicked men. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

This duty does not preclude association with the wicked with a view to their spiritual good. As followers of Jesus Christ it is our duty to endeavour to turn the wicked from his wickedness.

But it is our duty to avoid all voluntary and friendly association with the openly and defiantly wicked, all such association as may appear to countenance their wickedness. The testimony of the Sacred Scriptures on

this question is unmistakable. See Psa. i. 1; Prov. i. 10-16; iv. 14, 15; ix. 6; Acts ii. 40; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; Rev. xviii. 4.

Moreover, our text insists on the *thoroughness* of this separation. "Touch nothing of theirs." We must separate ourselves from their (1) society; (2) friendship; (3) pursuits; (4) customs, &c. In enforcement of this duty consider, that by *friendly association with such wicked persons*—

**I. We countenance them in their sins.**

It is the duty of every man to discourage evil; to wage determined and incessant warfare against wickedness; to agree to no truce with the devil. If we would discourage wickedness, we must separate ourselves from notorious evil-doers; we must not allow them any reason to suppose that we consent even by silence to their sins. Comp. 1 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 14. (a)



II. We are in peril of being drawn into their sins.

The contagion of their example may take hold upon us. Friendly association with the wicked is full of danger to our own spiritual health. Comp. Isa. lii. 11. Such association also makes us partakers of their sins. Comp. 2 John 10, 11. (b)

III. We are in peril of the judg-

ment which will fall upon them for their sins.

This was the peril of the congregation about the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They must speedily get away from those tents "lest they be consumed." This was the peril of Lot in Sodom. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Comp. Jer. li. 6, 45; Rev. xviii. 4.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every person is most sacredly bound, in times of prevailing degeneracy, to act an open, firm, and decided part in favour of virtue and religion; and resolutely endeavour, by his example, to discountenance vice and impiety in every shape. In an especial manner should he avoid the very appearance of those evils which are most prevalent around him, and practice with double care and diligence those virtues which are most generally neglected and despised. . . . It has been justly remarked, that when God confers on us the power to do good and repress evil, He lays us under an obligation to exert that power. Agreeably, the Apostle informs us, that to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Hence it follows that we are accountable for all the good which we might, but have not done; and for all the evil which we might, but have not prevented. By conniving at the sins of others, therefore, we make them our own. If the name of God be profaned, if His holy day be dishonoured, if a fellow-creature by intemperance render his family wretched, spread a snare in the path of his children, destroy his health, and finally plunge himself into eternal ruin, when we, by proper exertions, might have prevented it, a righteous God will not hold us guiltless, nor will rivers of tears, shed in secret over these sins, wash out the guilt thus contracted.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(b) There is but one resource for innocence among men or women, and that is, an embargo upon all commerce of bad men. Bar the window! bolt the door! nor answer their strain,

if they charm never so wisely! In no other way can you be safe. So well am I assured of the power of bad men to seduce the erring purity of man, that I pronounce it next to impossible for man or woman to escape, *if they permit bad men to approach and dally with them.*—*H. W. Beecher.*

Let no young man or woman go into a social circle where the influences are vicious or hostile to the Christian religion. You will begin by reproving their faults, and end by copying them. Sin is contagious. You go among those who are profane, and you will become profane. You go among those who use impure language, and you will use impure language. Go among those who are given to strong drink, and you will inevitably become an inebriate. There is no exception to the rule. A man is no better than the company he continually keeps. It is always best to keep ourselves under Christian influences. It is not possible, if you mingle in associations positively Christian, not to be made better men or women. The Christian people with whom you associate may not be always talking their religion, but there is something in the moral atmosphere that will be life to your soul. You choose out for your most intimate associates eight or ten Christian people. You mingle in that association; you take their counsel; you are guided by their example, and you live a useful life, and die a happy death, and go to a blessed eternity. There is no possibility of mistaking it; there is not an exception in all the universe or ages—not one.—*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*

### CHRIST'S DEATH A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

(Verse 29.)

We wish simply to take the fact that an uncommon death, a "visitation, which is not after the visitation of all men," was made a sign or evidence of the Divine mission of Moses. We wish to see whether a precisely similar sign or evidence may not be urged for the

Divine mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We mean to assert that our blessed Saviour did not "die the common death of all men;" and from and by this very circumstance we strengthen our belief in His having been the Son of God; yea, God

as well as man. We wish you to well examine whether there were not powerful indications in the mode in which our Lord and Saviour submitted to His last sufferings, that He did not die as an individual man, but as a sacrifice for the sins of this creation.

Three out of the four Evangelists make express mention of Christ's crying with a loud voice, immediately before He gave up the ghost. And this loud cry preceding almost instantaneously His decease, produced in the centurion who stood by, the persuasion that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (Mark xv. 39). Now let us see what it was which thus wrought on the centurion. There was before him a Being nailed to a cross, dying in a manner as lingering as it was painful. The thing to be expected was that the victim would gradually sink, growing weaker and weaker, until exhausted nature gave way and the soul escaped from the body. Since this mode of executing malefactors was ordinarily so tedious that the legs of the sufferers were broken in order to hasten their dissolution, we must conclude that no crucified person would have naturally died, unless through the slow process of exhaustion, life having ebbed away as though drop by drop, till there was nothing more for the torture to exact. It was therefore quite unnatural that our Lord should have had strength to utter a loud cry at the very moment of the separation of the soul from the body. He showed that there was nothing like an exhaustion of nature; and yet the mode of death was such, that it was only through exhaustion of nature that dissolution could take place. Indeed, we have additional testimony that Christ's dying as He did might justly be called unnatural, for He died long before those who were crucified with Him—in a time so unusually short, that when Joseph of Arimathea applied for leave to take the body, Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and would not believe it till he had called the centurion and obtained certain information. Our Lord, though

crucified, did not die in strict truth through the effects of crucifixion: He did not die, as the thieves did, through any necessity of nature, or because His enemies had been able to reach the citadel of life. And it was the manifest voluntariness of the death of Christ which overcame the centurion. He could not but perceive that, through some mysterious ordinance or prerogative, our Lord had His life entirely in His own keeping; so that in place of being subjected to death, He seemed to have literally the lordship over life. Comp. John x. 17, 18. It may sound like a paradox, but it is nevertheless a truth, that death had no power over Christ even when He died. He breathed His last only because choosing to suspend that animation, of which, as Himself alone the author, Himself alone could be the destroyer. And if, then, Christ did not "die the common death of all men," who can wonder that the centurion was confounded at the spectacle, or that he broke into an exclamation which showed that he felt the Sufferer was something more than a mere man? "Of a truth this Man was the Son of God."

But now let us take a wider survey, and accompany our Redeemer through the scenes of His agony. We have on other occasions pointed out to you the striking and almost inexplicable contrast between the deportment of Christ, and that of numbers of His followers, as the hour drew nigh of departure from earth. It is a contrast which seems all in favour of the disciple rather than the Master; for whilst there has been tranquility, and even triumph, in those who have been dying in the faith of the Redeemer, there was perturbation and anguish in that Redeemer Himself. The bold defender of truth has gone up to the stake or the scaffold rejoicing in being thought worthy to suffer for his Lord, and cheered by bright glimpses which he caught of immortality. How different was the demeanour of Christ when anticipating death from the hands of His enemies! I see Him casting Him-

self on the ground, praying that "if it be possible the cup might pass from Him;" &c. I hear Him uttering the most touching and thrilling complaints, as though His spirit were sorely disquieted and actually deserted of God. Yes, Christ is evidently not dying "the common death of all" Christians.

But let us see whether on this very account there be not reason for concluding Him to be God's own Son. For what are the causes which commonly make death terrible to men? In the first place, to a perfectly righteous individual nothing would make death so terrible as uncertainty with respect to the immortality of the soul. To the good man the thought of annihilation would be utterly insupportable.

But now let us view Christ as nothing more than an eminently righteous man who is about to submit to death to confirm the doctrines which he had taught. Died there ever the man so certified of the great truth of the soul's immortality? Had He not been Himself the preacher of that truth? (2 Tim. i. 10). . . . But what are we to say when we behold Him literally overcome with terror, manifesting a perturbation which could not be exceeded if the future were all darkness, or there were even a knowledge that the soul perished with the body? Oh! we can only say that the agony of the Mediator proves Him less than man, or more than man. It is what no mere man, at least no mere Christian man, passing from one world to another, with just his own account to make up and his own pains to undergo, ever had, or could have, to sustain. We think ourselves warranted in calling upon you to apply the reasoning of our text; and to conclude that God had sent Christ as a propitiation for sin, forasmuch as He does not "die the common death of all men;" and is not "visited after the visitation of all men."

We go on to observe, that however assured a man might be as to the soul's immortality, he might be harrassed

with doubts as to his acceptance with God; and this would necessarily produce a painful shrinking from the act of dissolution. In ordinary cases it is just herein that the distressing thing lies. This is true in the case of the righteous. We cannot be surprised if they are sometimes daunted as they view death at hand.

But now, can you think that there ever lived the man so persuaded of the favour of God, so secure of happiness at death, as Jesus of Nazareth? Had He not been pure in thought, and word, and deed; so that there could be no place for repentance, as there had been none for sin? And was He not thoroughly certain that He was about to enter on a recompense such as had never been awarded to any created being? (Heb. xii. 2). Who then shall meet death composedly—who triumphantly—if not Jesus Christ? . . . . But how is the expectation answered? That afflicted and agitated Man, prostrated on the ground, trembling and astonished and convulsed—is this the Being who has everything in His favour, and over whom we have felt it impossible that death could exert any terrifying power? . . . . What account do we give of this? This should make you feel that He must be sustaining some lofty and responsible character—that in the scene which is so counter to expectation He has to bear some vast burden which that character entails. We contend that the doctrine of the atonement—the doctrine that Christ died as a sin-offering and propitiation for the offences of the world—furnishes the only explanation of the anguish and the horrors of the sufferer.

Blessed be His name! we may meet death with confidence, because He met it in terror; for "by His stripes we are healed." He took away the sting of death, but it was by bearing that sting in His own soul; He scattered the darkness of the grave, but it was by Himself enduring the eclipse of the face of His Father.—*Henry Melville, B.D.*



## THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 31-35.)

These verses warrant the following observations:—

I. That God vindicates the character of His faithful servants from the misrepresentations by which they may be assailed.

By this stern judgment on the rebels, Jehovah fulfilled the word of His servant Moses, and splendidly vindicated the character and calling of both Moses and Aaron. By it He also honoured the extraordinary confidence which Moses had exercised in Him, in the calm and unshaken declaration which he made that God would manifest in a certain miraculous manner whether He had commissioned him or not. God always honours the faith of His servants; and they may confidently leave the vindication of their character and call to Him. Such vindication may be delayed, but it is certain. Comp. *Psa.* xxxvii. 5, 6.

II. That the Divine threatenings are certain of fulfilment.

"And it came to pass, as He had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder under them," &c. The declarations of His judgment against sin are spoken not merely *in terrorem*. His threatenings are as true as His promises. If any soul will persist in rebellion against God he will find to his cost that the punishment denounced against sin will be inflicted. (*a*)

III. That everything in the universe may be employed by God as the instrument of His judgments.

In this history we find that the earth and the forces that are at work within it were the instruments of His judgment upon Dathan and Abiram, and the fire upon Korah and the two hundred and fifty who burnt incense. (*b*)

IV. That the wicked often involve those who are innocent of their sins in the consequences of such sins.

"The earth opened her mouth, and

swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods," &c. (vers. 32, 33). Thus these rebels brought destruction upon others. Some of the penalties of sin seldom fall merely upon the sinner. One man sins, and others suffer by reason of his sins. (See notes on this point on pp. 34 and 264.) This fact—

1. *Shows the heinousness of sin.*

2. *Should act as a restraint from sin.*

V. That hardened rebels are prone to cry out when the judgment of God falls upon them.

When the judgment of God fell upon them the rebels cried out so lamentably that the people who were round about fled in alarm lest the same judgment should overtake them. A little while ago they were bold and defiant; now they are terror-stricken. "Who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?"

1. *Their cries were selfish.* They were the expression of terror, not of repentance.

2. *Their cries were too late.* They should have cried before, while mercy might have been obtained; but now their cries are utterly in vain. Comp. *Prov.* i. 24-31. (*c*)

VI. That the judgments of God occasion alarm amongst men.

"And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also." "Others' ruins should be our warnings." Generally the alarm which is awakened by the Divine judgments speedily passes away (as it did in this case) and leaves no good result. "Law and terrors do but harden."

Conclusion.

Here is very solemn warning to impenitent sinners. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take these away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." (*d*)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Is God all-mighty, all-mighty? Then do not imagine you can escape His judgments. His lightnings find us out. His sharp spear penetrates our secrecy. You have evaded Him now fifty years, and you think you can do it fifty more. Believe me, as speaking the word of the Lord, *you cannot*. Has the ox that has been driven into the fat pasture escaped the knife? Look at the noble animal there. Look at the rich grass or clover, and see the sunshine falling upon the scene, and the ox says, "I am at rest, I have escaped the knife of the slayer," not knowing that the pasture is on the way to the slaughter-house, and that next to its death stands the rich blessing of its life. There are many oxen that are being prepared for the slaughter when they little think it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) Mark here, how all creatures obey their Creator, and are at His commandment: when God willeth the earth to open her mouth, it openeth; when He willeth it to swallow, it swalloweth up; when He willeth it to close again, it closeth; when He willeth the fire to come down, it cometh: and to consume, it consumeth. The sounding of the rams' horns threw down the high walls of Jericho at His commandment. The waters of the Red Sea stood still, and Jordan fled back at His word. The fire could not burn, nor the lions devour when it pleased the Almighty. Acknowledge therefore His infinite power for our instruction; and let us rest upon it in all dangers for our consolation.—*Attersoll*.

God is not confined to one method of punishment. He toucheth a man's bones, and they melt; He breathes upon a man's brain, and henceforth he is not able to think. He comes in at night-time, and shakes the foundations of man's most trusted towers, and in the morning there is nought but a heap of ruins. He disorganizes men's memories, and in an instant they confuse all the recollections of their life-time; He touches man's tongue, and the fluent speaker becomes a stammerer. He breaks the staff in twain, and he who was relying upon it is thrown down in utter helplessness.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point see p. 252.

(c) Now these rebels begin to cry, but they cry out and howl when it is too late: they should have cried unto God for mercy and forgiveness while it was time and pardon was offered. Thus no doubt did many men of the

old world cry out when they were in the water, but then the acceptable time was past; they should have watered their hearts with the tears of repentance when Noah preached unto them. The Sodomites no doubt cried out when fire and brimstone was come down upon them, but they should have cried to God when He cried to them by Lot whom He sent among them. But then was the time of judgment; the time of mercy was gone and past. So it was with Esau, when he had sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, he cried with a great cry and a bitter, but it was too late. Heb. xii. 17; Gen. xxvii. 38. So did the rich man, being in hell in torments, Luke xvi. 23; then he called for mercy, but mercy was departed from him. Here is time and place for mercy, but there is no mercy to be had in hell. The earth is the school of instruction; hell is the house of correction. There the reprobate cry and yell, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, but it is without ease, without end, without profit. They that could shed never a tear to God in this life, shall be constrained to shed abundance of tears in the pit of destruction. The tears of repentance that we pour out ascend up unto heaven, and are kept in a bottle of remembrance; but the tears that are wrung from the reprobate in hell, are never gathered up, nor regarded of God, and are utterly unprofitable to ourselves. Let it therefore be our wisdom to make use of the time of God's mercy and patience, and know that there is no place of repentance after this life.—*Attersoll*.

(d) When the death-thirst is in your throat, what do you think you will do without God? To die in God's presence, is simply to let life blossom into something better than life; but to die without God must be horrible! You will not want your boon companions then. The drink will not pacify you then. Music will have no charms for you then. The love of a tender and gentle wife can yield you but sorry comfort then. You may have your money bags at your side, but they will not calm your palpitating heart then. You will hear the booming of the waves of the great sea of eternity; you will feel your feet slipping into the dreadful quicksand; you will clutch about for help, but there will be none! Instead thereof invisible hands shall begin to pull you down, and down through the dark sea you must descend to those darker depths, where dread despair will be your everlasting heritage.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

## THE JUDGMENT OF KORAH.

(Verses 31-33.)

A reference to the words of Moses recorded in verses 29 and 30, will show that the death of these men was a

supernatural event. Moses foretells the exact manner in which it should take place; he calls it "a new thing;"

he stakes his Divine commission upon it—"Hereby shall ye know, that Jehovah has sent me." It was new as the dividing of the Red Sea had been new, or the standing still of the sun in after days in obedience to the command of Joshua, and was as miraculous as either of those events. God alone could have given such an attestation to the mission of a man; the death of Korah was an emphatic and terrible answer to the charges which had been brought against Moses; and its following so immediately upon his words adds another supernatural element to the event. We may learn from it and from what led to it—

I. That the human character which most approaches perfection, and the most qualified leader of men, may be falsely accused by those to whom he is a blessing. Probably Moses never had a superior either in character or ability, yet to him it was said, "Ye take too much upon you" (ver. 3).

2. It must depend upon the *character* and not upon the *number* of the people whether their voice is to be taken as the voice of God. Nearly all Israel, it appears (ver. 21), were with Korah and his associates, yet Moses, although almost alone, had God and right on his side.

3. That God will, sooner or later, vindicate those of His servants who have been falsely accused. False charges have rested upon many for *centuries*, and at the end of that time the truth has come to light. There is to be a day which shall "declare it" (1 Cor. iii. 13). The Son of God lived and died under false accusation, but He was vindicated by His resurrection; and when He shall be revealed from heaven "with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14), He will bring to light men's hidden motives, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.—*From "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament."*

### A MEMORIAL OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 36-40.)

These verses teach the following important truths:—

I. That things appropriated to religious uses should be reverently regarded.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning; for they are hallowed . . . for they offered them before the Lord; therefore they are hallowed." Comp. Lev. xxvii. 28. For notes and an illustration on this point, see pp. 56, 57. (a)

II. That the designs and doings of wicked men are overruled by God for the accomplishment of His purposes.

"The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar." In this way "God's altar was *protected* by the means which had been used to *violate* its sanctity." "Surely the wrath

of man shall praise Thee." We have a striking illustration of this in the sins of Joseph's brethren, and the way in which they were used by God for the carrying out of His gracious designs. Comp. Gen. i. 20.

III. That he who sins against God injures himself.

"These sinners against their own souls," or, "against their own lives." By sin man injures himself *physically*. When the laws of health are violated disease and misery follow. By sin man injures himself *morally*. Sin blunts the spiritual sensibilities, stifles the aspirations, and quenches the hopes of the soul, &c. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." (b)

IV. That the judgments of God should be remembered and heeded.

These broad plates for a covering of the altar were to "be a sign unto the



children of Israel. . . . a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company." Man is prone to think that he may sin, and escape the punishment of his sin, notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence against such a notion; hence the importance of memorials such as this. The sternest judgments of God are speedily lost sight of by those who most need to keep them in mind; therefore this memorial was

fitted to answer a useful end in reminding the people of this judgment, and so deterring them from sin. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition." "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

#### Conclusion:

Seeing that God is so concerned to guard us against sin, it surely behoves us to flee from it as from our worst foe.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The Christian dispensation, although it is a dispensation of universality, and bases all its promises and sanctions upon the fact of spiritual service, has not annulled the seemingly and the sacred in connection with the worship of God. The false pride of Gerizim is humbled by its superior light. The haughtiness which would build an exclusive altar at Jerusalem is rebuked by every word of its inspired lips. It proclaims that everywhere where need compels, and where hearts prompt, and where the wealth of love constrains the offering, man may build a temple and look for acceptance and blessing. But it nowhere approves the idea that all places are equally sacred, or that God has ceased to visit Zion, and to dwell in its tabernacles with His manifestations of peculiar regard. There is a sentimental devotion that has become very fashionable now-a-days, a sort of spurious spirituality, minced out commonly from the lips of most unspiritual people—a kind of domestic pantheism, whose flame of devotion is too subtle to be kindled in houses made with hands. They tell us—and it is true—that the heart which God has touched will find Him everywhere, in every

gracious prodigality of nature, and in every bounteous ministry of life; that to His tuned spirit the wild heatherbells sing Sabbath knells. Well, it is true; but it is true also—a profounder truth in theory, and a commoner experience in fact—that God has special honours for the places that are devoted to His worship; and it is true, too, that the spirit tuned to the music of the sanctuary is the keenest in its recognition of those tremulous airs of worship-song which are floating all the universe around.—*W. M. Panshon, LL.D.*

(b) You have heard of the Spartan youth who concealed a stolen fox under his garment, and although it was eating into his bowels, he would not show it, and therefore died through the creature's bites. You are of that sort, sinner; you are carrying sin in your bosom, and it is eating out your heart. God knows what it is, and you know what it is. Now, you cannot keep it there and be unbitten, undestroyed. Why keep it there? Oh, cry to God with a vehement cry, God save me from my sin! Oh, bring me, even me, to the foot of Thy Son's cross, and forgive me, and then crucify my sin, for I see clearly now that sin must perish or I must.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

#### THE COVERING OF THE ALTAR, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 38.)

Let us inquire what these plates on the altar would teach the people.

I. How futile it is for any one to oppose God, and how God can make the opposition of men helpful to His cause.

How easily God brings down the pride of man! No weapon that is

formed against Him can prosper. (Job ix. 4.) "He is wise"—man cannot outwit Him: "He is mighty in strength"—man cannot overcome Him. To oppose Him is only to place thorns and briars before a consuming fire: the attempt is foolish, fruitless, and destructive. Angels rebelled, and it was

their ruin. Pharaoh opposed God, and he was destroyed. It was the same with the people in the Wilderness. These plates would be lasting witnesses of the madness and the futility of opposing God.

Further, they teach that God can make use of the very opposition, and turn what was meant to be destructive to be helpful to His cause. These censers were designed to be rivals to those of Aaron; the avowed object of the rebels was to take the priesthood from the family of Aaron and to make the altar common property. What did God do? He caused these very censers to be made into plates for a covering of the altar, so as to preserve it from the action of the fire that was ever burning on it. God permits evil, but He ever controls it (Psalm lxxvi. 10). We should never tremble for the success of God's work. As a matter of fact no opposition has ever hurt His work. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." In all history we see Him working out His own wise, great, and good purposes from the tangled web of human life.

II. That God wishes one age to learn from another.

His treatment of men is not only punitive, but educational. These plates were for a memorial; they were to "be a sign," &c. God did not want the event to be forgotten. He teaches us through human life. The Bible to a great extent is made up of biography—brief records of human lives. God shows us how one prospers, and where another fails; and He means one age to learn from another. The wrecks we meet with in society, by drunkenness, gambling and other sins (as with these plates), God holds them up to "be a sign unto" us.

III. That sacred things must be treated reverently.

"They offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed." God was

then teaching the people by practical illustrations, and not by the mere announcing of principles. Thus here He taught them and us the importance of dealing reverently with sacred things. There is need of this lesson in the present day; for there is a tendency to "pooh pooh" many things which our fathers held sacred. Human reason is enthroned: Divine things are brought to its bar, and are very freely and irreverently handled. It is so in respect of the Bible, the Lord's day, the fundamental truths of Christianity, &c. "Hands off" these sacred things! they are hallowed to the Lord; let us not treat them as if they were ordinary things.

IV. That the sinner ever injures himself.

God speaks of these men as "sinners against their own souls," or lives. They had brought ruin on themselves. These plates would teach the people that "the way of transgressors is hard," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and "he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." Sin robs God, does harm to others, but it ruins none but the doer of it. Every sin of man is a wrong to his own nature: we see it so physically, mentally, and morally. Every sin is a transgression of some law, and the broken law insists on its penalty. Sin hardens the soul, deprives it of good, alienates it from God, defiles it, shuts it from heaven, makes it only fit for hell, and exposes it to the eternal curse. Through these plates God cries to the sinful, "Do thyself no harm."

Conclusion:—

1. *What folly is a life of sin!* The Biblical definition of a sinner is—a Fool.

2. *To obey God and to please Him is true wisdom.* He ever seeks our good, knows what is best for us, so in obeying Him we do ourselves the greatest possible good.—David Lloyd.

THE AGGRAVATED REBELLION OF THE PEOPLE, THE EFFECTUAL INTERCESSION  
OF THE GOOD, AND THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD.

(Verses 41-50.)

Consider:—

I. The aggravated rebellion of the people.

"On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." In this fresh outbreak of rebellion we have—

1. *Terrible disregard of Divine warnings.* These people had witnessed judgment after judgment because of rebellion; only yesterday they had seen Dathan and Abiram swallowed up by earthquake, and Korah and his company consumed by fire from the Lord, yet to-day they break out into rebellion again. Warnings seem to be utterly lost upon them. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck," &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

2. *Base ingratitude to Moses and Aaron.* "They murmured against Moses and against Aaron," &c. It seems as if the people believed "that Moses and Aaron had used some cunning in this business, and that the earthquake and fire were artificial; else, had they discerned the hand of God in this punishment, could they have dared the anger of the Lord in the very face of justice?" Their charge against Moses and Aaron was utterly unjust and basely ungrateful. It was owing to the intercession of these holy men (ver. 22) that the whole congregation was not consumed; yet, &c.

3. *Profane characterization of the wicked as the people of God.* They speak of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their confederates, as "the people of the Lord." Thus they justify the ungodly; they canonise the most stout-hearted rebels as saints of the Lord. This rebellion seems to us the worst which has arisen in the history of this rebellious people. The time of its occurrence—immediately after most awful judgments; the form which it assumed,

this malicious charge against Moses and Aaron; and its reason, their sympathy with hardened rebels whom God had destroyed, render this rebellion one of fearful aggravations. How powerless are the sternest judgments to change men's sinful hearts, or effectually to restrain from sin! Only the grace of God can do this.

II. The speedy interposition of Jehovah.

"And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared," &c. (vers. 42-45). Thus God interposes by:—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* "The cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared." "As the cloud rested continually above the tabernacle during the time of encampment (chap. ix. 18 sqq.; Exod. xl. 38), we must suppose that at this time the cloud covered it in a fuller and much more conspicuous sense, just as it had done when the tabernacle was first erected (chap. ix. 15; Exod. xl. 34), and that at the same time the glory of God burst forth from the dark cloud in a miraculous splendour."—*Keil and Del.* This was done for—(1) A security to His servants. (2) A check to the rebels.

2. *The declaration of the desert of the rebels.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment." Had they been so consumed, who could have questioned the righteousness of their doom?

III. The effectual intercession of Moses and Aaron.

When God spake to Moses about consuming the congregation, he and Aaron "fell upon their faces" in humble and earnest prayer to Him for the guilty



people. Moses discovered that the plague had begun; he directed Aaron to "take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar," &c. (vers. 46-48). Notice here:—

1. *The kindness of Moses and Aaron.* The congregation had risen up in rebellion against them; this plague was the punishment inflicted by God because of the rebellion; yet Moses and Aaron entreated God to spare the rebellious people. Freely they forgive them. Their conduct reminds us of Him who prayed, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (a)

2. *The courage of Aaron.* He feared neither the excited people who were embittered against him, nor the pestilence which was smiting down the people by thousands; but "ran into the midst of the congregation," &c.

3. *The zeal of Aaron.* He was now an old man, yet he "ran into the midst," &c. An example for Christian ministers.

4. *The success of Aaron.* "The plague was stayed." His intercession was accepted by God, and it availed to arrest the advance of the pestilence. In this we have very striking confirmation of his priesthood. "Compare the censer

of Aaron here with 'the censers of those sinners against their own souls.' Those provoked God's anger, this pacified it; those destroyed men's lives, this saved them; no room therefore is left to doubt of Aaron's call to the priesthood."

How great is the power of prayer! (James v. 16-18). (b)

If God thus respected the sacrifice and intercession of Aaron, how great must be the efficacy of the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ!

IV. The exercise of the justice and mercy of God.

1. *Here is an impressive display of Divine justice.* "They that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred." (c)

2. *Here is an encouraging manifestation of Divine mercy.* Notwithstanding the aggravated and oft-repeated provocations of the people, they were not all destroyed. It was of the Lord's mercies that they were not all consumed. (d)

Conclusion. Learn—

1. *The heinousness of sin.*

2. *The great value of a faithful ministry.*

3. *The readiness of God to forgive sin.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) **A forgiving spirit** is a noble, generous Christian virtue. It takes its rise in that love of God and man which is the fruit of the Spirit and the fulfilling of the law; it is made up of love and forbearance, united with the tenderness of compassion towards those who have injured us, and fortified by some just sense of our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness from God. In the full sense of the thing itself, it consists of the inward spirit of forgiveness and the outward act of reconciliation. It belongs to the heart, just as every other grace has its seat in the inner man. In this view of it, it is the opposite of revenge, which angrily seeks redress for injuries by inflicting injuries in return. It is the inward exercise of kindness and goodwill towards our enemies and those who have wronged us. It is an abhorrence of their wrong, yet a kind regard for the wrongdoer. It cannot be genuine unless it be accompanied by these benevolent emotions, and at a great remove from all bitterness and wrath. God requires that we forgive from the heart. This inward spirit ought to be always in exercise, whatsoever may be the character of those who have

injured us, and whatever their present and future conduct. We may feel benevolently towards them, without at all committing ourselves in favour of their conduct or character. They may repeat the injury they have done us every day of their lives, but this does not warrant in us the spirit of malignity or unkindness. We should love them still, and do them good as we have opportunity.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(b) The conduct of the eminent and justly celebrated Francke, in the establishment of the hospital and school for the poor, at Halle, near Glaucha, in Saxony, is well known. Having no permanent funds to meet the expenses, it may be easily supposed that the good man would be frequently reduced to great difficulties; at such times the interpositions of the Providence of God were truly remarkable. About Easter, 1696, he knew not where to obtain money for the expenses of the ensuing week; but when their food was reduced to the very last morsel, one thousand crowns were contributed by some entirely unknown person. At another time, all their provisions were exhausted, and the good

minister wisely presented his requests to the God of mercy, who careth even for the ravens when they cry. When prayer was over, just as he was taking his seat, a friend from a distance arrived with fifty crowns, which was shortly followed by twenty more. At another period, the workmen wanted thirty crowns, when he remarked that he had no money, but that he trusted in God; scarcely had he uttered the sentence, when, in this moment of necessity, the precise sum arrived. "Another time," says Francke, "all our provision was spent; but in addressing myself to the Lord, I found myself deeply affected with the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread;' and my thoughts were fixed in a more special manner upon the words 'this day,' because on the very same day we had great occasion for it. While I was yet praying, a friend of mine came before my door in a coach, and brought the sum of four hundred crowns."—*R. Arvine, A.M.*

(c) Goodness may punish; nay, it must punish the ill-deserving. A good law punishes; a good judge punishes; and the more certainly because they are good. However inclined to forgive the Divine Lawgiver may be, and however strongly moved to acts of mercy by the tenderness of His own kind nature, justice has claims as well as clemency and compassion. And what shall countervail these righteous demands? Reason cannot; conscience dare not. The whole history of the Divine government is proof that sin cannot go unpunished. The nature of the Deity forbids it; because He is just and righteous as well as good and kind. His law forbids it, and stands forth a pledge to the universe that it knows no such thing as impunity for crime. It is essential to the character of God as Law-

giver, that wherever the claims of the law are violated, His authority be enforced by the infliction of its penalty; otherwise it is no longer law, and He no longer Lawgiver.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(d) The Scriptures everywhere magnify the mercy of God, and speak of it with all possible advantage, as if the Divine nature, which does in all perfections excel every other thing, did in this perfection excel itself. And of this we have a farther conviction, if we but lift up our eyes to God, and then, turning them upon ourselves, begin to consider how many evils and miseries that every day we are exposed to, by His preventing mercy are hindered, or, when they were coming upon us, stopped or turned another way. How oft our punishment has He deferred by His forbearing mercy; or, when it was necessary for our chastisement, mitigated and made light! How oft we have been supported in our afflictions by His comforting mercy, and visited with the light of His countenance, in the exigencies of our soul, and the gloominess of despair! How oft we have been supplied by His relieving mercy in our wants, and, when there was no hand to succour, and no soul to pity us, His arm has been stretched out to lift us from the mire and clay, and, by a providential train of events, brought about our sustenance and support! And, above all, how daily, how hourly, how minutely we offend against Him; and yet, by the power of His pardoning mercy, we are still alive! For, considering the multitude and heinousness of our provocations, "it is of His mercy alone that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. Who so is wise will ponder these things, and He will understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."—*Archbishop Tillotson.*

### THE SIN OF MAN AND THE SALVATION OF GOD.

(Verse 46.)

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Israel's judgments were recorded for our warning; Israel's mercies, for our encouragement. What Israel was, we are; what Israel suffered, we deserve; what Israel enjoyed, in the way of mercy, we may hope for.

The principle of all this is very plain. Human beings placed in the same circumstances act very much in the same manner. They have the same hopes and the same fears, they display the same obduracy and the same guilt;

and they can only be saved in the same mysterious manner. And, accordingly, God's methods of grace towards them are essentially the same in all ages. The censer and the incense and the atonement of Aaron may fitly remind us of the work and intercession of our great High Priest.

I. There is an awful controversy between a holy God and a rebellious world.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague has begun." A sentence of death has been passed upon every soul of man. Many have already perished, &c. The world some of us

deem so fair and happy, is nothing better than the camp of Israel;—a scene of mercy, it is true; but yet a scene of misery, terror, and death. Our sin resembles theirs in many aspects, and has the same aggravations.

1. *As it directly strikes against the authority and the grace of God, whatever be the form it assumes.* Israel professedly murmured against Moses and Aaron, but God viewed it as rebellion against Himself. How different often is sin from what sin appears. "Ye have killed the people of the Lord;" but it was not Moses that killed them, but God Himself. . . . God struck a blow which no human arm could have inflicted to punish them for their murmurings, and in a moment fourteen thousand and seven hundred die of the plague by His omnipotent hand.

Learn that all sin, whatever form it assumes, is in reality committed against God. When the undutiful child rises against his parent, he rebels against God. When we complain of our circumstances and lot in life, we rebel against God. When we refuse the messages of His mercy, and neglect the great salvation, we rebel against God. If the office of Moses and Aaron were so much to be regarded, how much more the work and office of God's beloved Son! Comp. Heb. xii. 25.

Often when we complain of *second causes* in our afflictions we sin against God. We must take heed how we push God out of His own world. He will be acknowledged in our afflictions as well as in our mercies. Comp. Job xxxvi. 24. Israel failed here. In reality they justified Korah and his companions in their rebellion, and secretly condemned the judgment of God against them as severe and harsh. But God will be

justified when He speaks, and be clear when He judges. He will be acknowledged in the judgments that desolate our families and wring our souls with anguish, as in the mercies which yield unmixed gladness and delight.

2. *As it is often committed in the face of frequent and awful warnings.* Many deem it hard to believe this obduracy of Israel, and would think it almost too bad to be true. But the man who knows himself believes it all. Which of us has not despised His warnings, trembling one day at His judgments and making light of them the next? in the hour of sickness binding ourselves by solemn vows to His service, and upon the return of health rising to greater heights of iniquity than before?

3. *As it is heightened by the experience of God's preserving and upholding mercy.*

II. There is at hand a prescribed and Divinely approved remedy.

When wrath was gone out from God, Moses was quick-sighted to discern it, and as prompt to apply the remedy. Yet observe, Moses does not take upon him this reconciliation; he calls upon Aaron to do so. I know not which to admire more, the courage or the mercy of Aaron.

1. *That our only escape from threatened wrath is through the mediation and advocacy of our High Priest.* As the trembling Israelites found in Aaron an interposer and deliverer, so may we find in Christ a Saviour.

2. *That the plan of Salvation by Faith is as efficacious in reality as it is simple in its mode of application.*

3. *That an immediate application to it is our only protection against certain ruin.* "Go quickly."—*The late Samuel Thodey.*

## AN AWFUL PLAGUE AND A SURPRISING REMEDY.

(Verses 46-48)

The solemn duties devolving upon the ministers of religion can never be too deeply contemplated by themselves, or

too seriously considered by their hearers. It is of consequence to us, that we may clearly apprehend our duty; of conse-



quence to *them*, that by estimating our responsibility they may judge of their own. If both speakers and hearers could see things now as they must see them very soon, when Death has done his office, when the trumpet shall sound, and the books be opened, and the retributions of eternity shall take place, what a change would be produced both in our ministrations and in your worship. (a)

A very noble spirit displayed by Moses and Aaron. They had been deeply injured, yet, &c.

### I. An awful spectacle exhibited.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun." It was awful in itself—awful in its causes—its concomitants—its issues; for after death, the judgment. Awful to see the thousands of Israel in high rebellion against God, to see the countenance maddened with rage, suddenly smitten with disease, then convulsed with anguish, then numbered with the dead.

It was the more awful, as it was not a cursory thing following in the ordinary course of events, but it was a direct judgment immediately following the sin—a fearful visitation tremendously signalling the most hardened and obdurate sinners. What a circle is here of sins and judgments! because the people rose up against Moses and Aaron, therefore God consumed them; and because God consumed them, therefore they rose up against Moses and Aaron; and now their third rebellion draws down a more awful visitation. "Though hand join in hand," &c.

O what has sin done! It has turned angels into demons, man into an heir of wrath, Paradise into a wilderness, &c. Other evils are limited—the destructive forces of nature, the earthquake, the volcano, the deluge, the wide-wasting conflagration, know their bound; they have their period and their issue and their appointed range; but sin has none; it lays waste not here and there a country, but a world. The pestilence fastened only upon the body, and after that had no more that it could do; but sin destroys the soul, by sepa-

rating it from the Source of Life—*nay*, it casts both soul and body into hell.

Mark one impressive circumstance. Moses marks the wrath in its very commencement, sees the beginnings of the pestilence, when no other man discerns or suspects it, even as the physician sees disease in what appears to be the ripe bloom of health, or the veteran sailor marks the prelude of the storm before the heavens have lost their brightness. Moses had heard the word of God in the Tabernacle, &c. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," &c.

There are signs in the moral world of the commencement of evil, and the going forth of wrath, which the wise observer cannot mistake. "The plague is begun." When the man first restrains prayer—when the spirit of the world creeps into the mind of Christians—when they begin to lessen their fear of sin, and to compromise principle, to seek a more accommodating system of religion, to lengthen the creed and shorten the Decalogue—when private prayer is a task, and the minor moralities of life begin to be disregarded—there are fearful symptoms of decay and declension. "The plague is begun."

### II. The surprising remedy found.

"Take a censer," &c. Where is the physician who would have recommended this as a cure for the plague? Who would have thought that the appearance of a single priest amidst the dying and the dead should have stopped the progress of the pestilence? Yet the incense and the fire and the oblation accomplish that for Israel which all the wisdom of the Egyptians could never have achieved. Who does not, in like manner, rebel against God's appointed method of pardon? or question the mysterious virtue of Christ's atoning blood, and doubt the efficacy of faith, repentance, and prayer? Who does not say with Naaman, "Are not Abana and Pharpar" &c.?

Mark the promptitude and self-votion of Aaron. He does not pause, does not cavil at the insufficiency of the means, but thrusts himself into the

post of danger. He stands boldly between the living and the dead, as one who will either die with them or have them live with him. Type of Him who on Calvary said, "Father forgive them." How promptly He came!

Mark the principles illustrated. There is no cure for the evils which sin has introduced but by a sacrifice of atonement. "Without shedding of blood," &c. And as a new offering could not be presented, he was to take the fire from the altar, the ashes of the morning sacrifice, and put incense upon that in the golden censer. If Aaron's sacrifice be thus accepted, how much more the offering of the great High Priest? "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14.)

But it is not enough that the sacrifice be presented, but prayer must be offered. Beautiful to see, wherever Aaron moved, Death retire and Hope

revive. More so to see the spiritually dead quickened (Eph. ii. 4-6).

III. A practical application demanded.

1. *What infinite solemnity attaches to all the offices of religion.* Death and life are involved. The two hundred and fifty men that offered incense perished: their spirit was bad. What if we bring strange fire! Aaron's offering saves life. If awful to preach, so also to hear.

2. *How dreadful if the plague be in the heart, and we, unconscious of danger, neglect the remedy.* "Examine yourselves."

3. *What need ministers have for the prayers and sympathies of their people.* The whole camp looks to Moses and Aaron. We have all the infirmities of which you complain; we are exposed to the infection, &c.

4. *Rejoice in the absolute sufficiency of salvation applied by the Spirit.*—*Samuel Thodey.*

### ILLUSTRATION.

(a) I know not what others think of these concerns, but for my own part I am ashamed of my insensibility, and wonder at myself that I deal no more with my own and other men's souls as becomes one who looks for the great day of the Lord. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smites me that I have not been more serious and fervent. It is no trifling matter to stand up in the face

of a congregation and deliver a message of salvation or damnation as from the living God in the name of the Redeemer: it is no easy thing to speak so plainly that the most ignorant may understand; so seriously that the dearest heart may feel; and so convincingly that contradictory cavillers may be silenced and awakened.—*Richard Baxter.*

### THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING.

(Verses 47, 48.)

I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of man who "like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way."

I. Look at Aaron as the lover of the people.

In this case *he* was the aggrieved party. The clamour was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who interceded and saved the people. The old man with generous love hastened into the midst

of the people, &c. Is not this the very picture of our Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonoured Him? &c. Yet He becomes the Saviour of His people.

"Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste He fled," &c.

Aaron in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of the people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood, &c. But into the midst of their crowd he boldly springs (comp. John i. 11). Jesus transcends Aaron;

Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people; Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there He stood even in the hour of death, waving His censer, staying the plague, &c.

Again, Aaron might have said, "But *the Lord* will surely destroy *me* also with the people; if I go where shafts of death are flying they will reach me." He exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. . . . The plague which Jesus kept from us slew Him. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

Aaron deserves much commendation from the fact that he *ran* into the host. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within. And was it not so with Christ? . . . While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ.

## II. View Aaron as the great propitiator.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, &c.

Aaron as the Propitiator is to be looked at as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censer, &c. Behold the Great High Priest! His incense consists first of His positive obedience to the Divine law. Then mixed with this is His blood, &c. Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement.

Besides that, Aaron must be the ordained priest; for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others; their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained One, &c. Comp. Heb. v. 4-10. None but Jesus; all other priests and offerings we disdain.

We must look upon Aaron as being ready for his work. The people were ready to perish, and he was ready to save. Oh, my hearer, Jesus Christ stands ready to save thee now. Trust Him.

## III. View Aaron as the interposer.

The old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moveth along a field of corn." Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. "The stripes must fall on Me," He cries. There is nothing between me and hell save Christ. But He is enough. There is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God.

## IV. View Aaron as the saviour.

It was Aaron, Aaron's censer, that saved the lives of that great multitude. Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Saviour. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron, &c. If Christ hath saved us He is a gracious Saviour indeed. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God, &c.

Aaron was an unaided saviour. He stands alone! And herein is he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trodden the winepress alone," &c. "There is none other name under heaven," &c.

Aaron as a saviour was all-sufficient. Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, *able* to save; you cannot save yourself, but He *can* save you. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool," &c.

## V. Aaron as the divider.

Aaron the anointed one stands here; on that side is death, on this side life; the boundary between life and death is that one man. . . . The one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is *Christ*. A man in Christ is a Christian: a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. On which side, then, art thou to-day?

As Christ is the great divider now, so will He be in the day of judgment. He shall divide them the one from the other, &c. Oh! on which side shall I be when all these transitory things are done away with? &c.—C. H. Spurgeon.



## AARON STAYING THE PLAGUE.

(Verses 47, 48.)

Open with a brief account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the awful punishment which befel them from God. The people on the next day as rebellious as before. The plague begun. Aaron's intercession;—

I. The willingness of Aaron to intercede.

He "ran into the midst," &c., though at this time of great age, above one hundred years. And this willingness will be more manifest, if we observe that he was—

1. *Regardless of the plague*; he feared not the contagion.

2. *Regardless of the people's enmity*; he dreaded not their malice; and forgave the injuries they had done him.

Show how in these respects Aaron was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus. The plague of sin had laid hold of our race; yet see the willingness of Jesus to come (Ps. xl. 7). "Lo, I come."

1. *He shrank not from us because of our pollution* (Rom. viii. 3; Heb. ii. 14-17). Nay, He took upon Him our curse (Gal. iii. 13; Isa. liii.). Our guilt and perishing condition that which moved His compassion.

2. *He did not abandon His work because of our enmity*, but though continually despised, rejected, &c., endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself (Heb. xii. 2, 3; Rom. xv. 3), and would not be turned from His purpose of love.

II. The nature of Aaron's intercession.

He took fire from the altar of *burnt offering*, where the fire was always burning; and he put *incense* upon the fire, that a sweet savour of atonement might ascend to God. So Jesus offers

the sacrifice of His own most precious blood, and perfumes it with the incense of His all-sufficient merit. The sacrifice of Jesus *ever new*; the fire always burning. Jesus interposes between the wrath of God and the perishing sinner. "Father forgive them," &c. "He made intercession for the transgressors." Enlarge upon the intercession of Jesus, —its constancy, its freeness—*spontaneous*.

III. The success of Aaron's intercession.

Aaron's incense more powerful to procure pardon, than the people's guilt to call down punishment. The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and turned away His wrathful indignation.

Observe, *the plague was stayed*. Aaron did not give over interceding until the plague had ceased. So Jesus will never give over interceding for a penitent believer, until the plague of sin is *perfectly done away*. And will never give over interceding for His Church, until *every member* of it has entered glory.

Conclusion:—

1. *Let us tremble at the wrath of an offended God*. Address the sinner. "Who can stand before this HOLY LORD GOD?" What wilt thou do in the day of visitation? No intercessor then.

2. *Let us rejoice in the intercession of our Great High Priest*. What need we any other mediators besides Him? Look at Korah and his company; were their intercessions received? And why not? They were not the *appointed* mediators. Why, then, go to saints and angels—the Virgin Mary?—*J. D. Lane, M.A.*

## THE PLAGUE STAYED.

(Verse 48.)

Observe,—

I. The evil.

Murmuring against God. Dissatisfac-

tion with God—His government, &c. Now this is the essence of all *sin*. Holiness is harmony—agreement with

God. Sin, disagreement and murmuring. So it was with the first sin, and every sin since. This leads to irreverence, complaining, and audacious presumption. How these abound—

1. *In profane swearing*,—horrid imprecations.

2. *In Sabbath profanation*. Counted as no sin.

3. *In gross intemperance*.

4. *In general profligacy*.

5. *In scepticism*. Denying God's government, &c.

6. *In recklessness*—amidst Divine judgments.

What a sight for a holy God to behold! I come back to the first idea:—All sin is contrariety to God—dissatisfaction with God; and hence, rebellion against His government.

## II. The punishment.

It was,—

1. *Divine*. God did it. No magistrate. No human pain or penalty. God immediately did it. Often sin mediately is its own punishment; but sometimes direct, &c.

2. *It was by the plague*. We do not know precisely what it was. Some sudden disease, which swept all before it. It was, however, evidently—(1) Fatal. Destroyed life. (2) Speedily so. Like a blast of wind, &c. (3) Invariably so. No one knew of a remedy.

How analogous is the nature and effect of sin! (1) Sin is the disease of the soul. (2) It is deadly in three senses—temporal, spiritual, and eter-

nal. (3) There is for it no human remedy. All human skill, &c. failed.

## III. The remedy.

1. *In itself, not apparently adapted*. Doubtless, the air was charged with death. But the incense was not possibly adapted to decompose, and change, and purify.

2. *It was connected with pious intercession*. In which there was confession of sin, admission of the justice of God, and the Divine mercy was implored. It was a direct appeal to God.

3. *It was intercession grounded on sacrifice*. By the priest, in view of the victims presented to God.

4. *It was efficient*. Completely. At once.

Let us now turn to the great remedy for sin. It is, (1) Not what human philosophy would have recommended. (2) It is essentially connected with the priestly work of Christ. His obedience, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, intercession. (3) It is *effectual*. The curse removed, wrath averted, mercy published, life offered. None need now die, no, not one. The connecting link between a guilty world and the remedy is, on God's part, the preaching of the Word; on our part, believing the Word so preached; by which repentance, humiliation of soul, and devotedness to God, are secured. Learn,—

1. *The extreme evil of sin*.

2. *The riches of the grace of God*.

3. *The immediate duty of the sinner*; to call earnestly on the Lord.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter the High-priesthood of Aaron is further confirmed by a supernatural and significant sign.

Verse 4. *The testimony*, “i.e., the Two Tables of the Law; cf. Exod. xxv. 16. No doubt the rods lay in front of the Tables within the Ark.”—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 5. *I will make to cease from Me*.

“שָׁכַךְ, *Hiph.*, to cause to sink, to bring to rest, construed with מַעַל in a pregnant signification, to quiet in such a way that it will not rise again.”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 6. *Twelve rods*. “Possibly the two tribes of the children of Joseph were reckoned together, as in Deut.

xxvii. 12. But as these two tribes had separate princes, and it was with the names of the princes that the rods were marked (ver. 2), it is more probable that the whole number of rods was twelve exclusively of Aaron's, as the Vulgate expressly renders ('fuerunt virgæ duodecim absque virga Aaron').—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 8. *Yielded almonds.* "Or rather 'ripened almonds,' i.e., 'brought forth ripe almonds.' Probably different portions of the rod showed the several stages of the process of fructification through which those parts which had advanced the furthest had passed. The name almond in Hebrew denotes the 'waking tree,' the 'waking fruit;' and is applied to this tree because it blossoms early in the season. It serves here, as in Jer. i. 11, 12, to set forth the speed and certainty with which, at God's will, His purposes are accomplished."—*Ibid.* "This was miraculous . . . for no ordinary branch would have buds, blossoms, and fruits upon it, all at once."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 10. *For a token,* &c. Keil and Del. translate: "For a sign for the rebellious, that thou putttest an end to

their murmuring, and they die not." Aaron's rod was probably lost while the Ark was in the hands of the Philistines; for it is stated in 1 Kings viii. 9 that there was "nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone."

Verses 12, 13. "A new section should begin with these verses. They are connected retrospectively with chap. xvi.; and form the immediate introduction to chap. xviii. The people were terror-stricken with the fate of the company of Korah at the door of the tabernacle, followed up by the plague in which so many thousands of their numbers had perished. Presumption passes by reaction into despair. Was there any approach for them to the tabernacle of the Lord? Was there any escape from death, except by keeping aloof from His presence? The answers are supplied by the ordinances that follow; ordinances which testified that the God of judgment was still a God of grace and of love."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. Keil and Del. translate: "Every one who comes near to the dwelling of Jehovah dies; are we all to die?"

## THE DIVINE PLAN FOR VINDICATING THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD OF AARON, AND ITS MORAL TEACHING.

### (Verses 1-5.)

The directions which are here given to Moses teach us—

I. That true ministers of religion are elected by God.

In directing Moses to place these rods in the tabernacle, the Lord promises to meet with him there, and He says, "And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom." God called Aaron to his office (Heb. v. 4). He here makes arrangements for confirming that call, and placing it beyond dispute. To enter the Christian ministry for its honours, or its emoluments, &c., is an awful sin. To refuse to enter it when convinced of the Divine call thereto is

also a sin. The authority of the true minister of Christ arises from his being sent forth by God. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 28; Gal. i. 1; Eph. iv. 7-13. (a)

II. It is of great importance that men should know that their ministers of religion are called by God.

The Lord here makes arrangements for His own miraculous interposition, in order that the Israelites might be completely convinced of the Divine authority of Aaron in his office. It is important that people should be convinced of the Divine call of their ministers, in order that—

1. *They might regard them with becoming respect.* They are ambassadors for



Christ; and should be treated as such. Comp. John xiii. 20; Phil. ii. 29; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. v. 17.

2. *They might take heed to their message.* If the ministers of Christ come to be regarded as mere lecturers on religious themes, having no authority from God, their ministry will be productive of little true and lasting good. Crowds may gather round the eloquent preacher, but they will be like those which gathered round the ancient prophet (Ezek. xxxiii. 30-32). When people see in their ministers a Christlike life, and manifest fitness for their sacred duties, and the signs of the Divine approval of their ministry, let them rest assured that such ministers have their commission from God, and their ministry should be received accordingly. "Despise not prophesyings." "Take heed how ye hear." (b)

III. The vitality of sin is of dreadful tenacity.

The miraculous sign for which Moses is directed to make arrangements was necessary to completely subdue the murmurings of the children of Israel. The previous judgments, although so numerous and terrible, had not effectually destroyed their tendency to mur-

mur against the leaders whom God had appointed. "Many men's lips," says Trapp, "like rusty hinges, for want of the oil of grace and gladness, move not without murmuring and complaining." It is a thing of extreme difficulty to eradicate any evil disposition from the human heart. "For such is the habitual hardness of men's hearts, as neither ministry, nor misery, nor miracle, nor mercy, can possibly mollify. Nothing can do it, but an extraordinary touch from the hand of Heaven." (c)

IV. God is engaged in eradicating sin from human hearts.

"I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel," &c. He cries to the sinner, "O do not this abominable thing, which I hate." His laws are all against sin. The great redemptive mission of Jesus Christ aims at the destruction of sin. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (d)

Since God is thus engaged, we may confidently anticipate that the crusade against sin will be gloriously triumphant. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The ministry is the Divinely-appointed agency for the communication of God's will to man. As a Divine institution, it advanced its claims in the beginning, and in no solitary instance have they been relinquished since. This Divine authorization and enactment are still in force. The Bible says, when Christ ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There might be something special, perhaps, in this original commission, but the principle of its Divine origin is evidently presented as the principle of the ministry itself; for St. Paul, who was not then called, who speaks of himself afterwards as one born out of due time, earnestly and anxiously vindicates the heavenly origin of his apostleship: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not of men; for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." This it is

which is the elevation of the Christian ministry, which exalts it far above human resources and human authority. It travels on in its own majestic strength—Heaven-inspired and Heaven-sustained. Moreover, the same passage which tells us of the institution of the ministry, announces its duration, and tells of the period when it shall be no longer needed, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This period, thus Divinely appointed for the cessation of the ministry, has obviously not yet arrived.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

It would appear to be a difficult lesson for the Church to learn, that God will choose His own instruments. In spite of a thousand proofs of sovereignty on this matter, the Church will stubbornly try to have a hand in the choice of ministers. Now that civilization has become a very devil to us, we say that God's agents shall not be carpenters, fishermen, tent-makers, or ploughmen. No, certainly not; they shall be sons of gentlemen; they shall

have hands unhardened by labour; they shall be favourites of conventional fortune. God will not have this; He will not be indebted to His creatures. The shepherd shall be entrusted with His thunder, and the husbandman shall wield His lightnings; the little child shall subdue the dragon, and the suckling shall not be afraid of the cockatrice.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) How many hear the Gospel, but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange—they read it with both their eyes—will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade—how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practise what they have gathered from it. A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it—as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot to the “i” had dropped off the letter; or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticise the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice. Oh, how men will hear and think it to be right, to be the height of perfection, to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one doit whether you did or did not like his sermon, his business being not to please your tastes, but to save your souls; not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) That plant must possess great vitality which increases by being uprooted and cut down. That which lives by being killed is strangely full of force. That must be a very hard substance which is hardened by lying in the blast furnace, in the central heat of the

fire, where iron melts and runs like wax. That must be a very terrible power which gathers strength from that which should restrain it, and rushes on the more violently in proportion as it is reined in. Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life. It makes Heaven’s gifts the stepping stones to hell, uses the lamps of the temple to show the way to perdition, and makes the Ark of the Lord, as in Uzzah’s case, the messenger of death. Sin is that strange fire which burns the more fiercely for being damped, finding fuel in the water which was intended to quench it. The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good. It is a deadly evil; judge ye how deadly! O that men knew its nature and abhorred it with all their hearts! May the Eternal Spirit teach men to know aright this worst of ills, that they may flee from it to Him who alone can deliver.—*Ibid.*

(d) God stands between the right and the wrong, not looking pleasant on the one and equally pleasant on the other; not looking as the sun looks, with a benignant face on the evil and on the good; and not as man looks, with only a less benignant face on the evil. He stands with all the fervour of His infinite love and all the majesty of His unlimited power, approving good, and legislating for it on the one side; and disapproving evil, and abhorring it, and legislating it down to the dust, and beneath the dust, into infamy and eternal penalty, on the other side. And if there be one truth that speaks throughout the Bible like the voice of God, and resounds with all the grandeur of Divine intonation, it is the truth that God does not look with an equal eye upon the evil and the good, that He is a discriminator of character, a lover of that which is right, and a hater of that which is wrong.—*H. W. Beecher.*

## AARON’S ROD AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 6-11.)

In this rod we have an illustration of—

I. The characteristics of the true Christian ministry.

1. *Life.* The rod of Aaron was quickened into life by God, while all the other rods remained mere dead wood. The true minister is alive spiritually. The life of supreme sympathy with God is his. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” “He that hath the Son of God hath the life.” “I live; yet not I,

but Christ liveth in me,” &c. The true minister is aflame with zeal for the glory of God, and the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of believers. Without this spiritual life man is utterly unfit for the Gospel ministry, even though he possessed every other qualification in great measure. (a)

2. *Beauty.* “The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms.” It was not only living, but beautiful. The true minister of Christ is adorned with the beauties of holiness. The Gospel which he

preaches to others he endeavours to illustrate in his own life; he translates his creed into his conduct. (b)

3. *Fruitfulness.* "The rod of Aaron . . . yielded almonds." This was not promised by the Lord (comp. ver. 5); it makes the vindication of the priesthood of Aaron more gloriously complete and conclusive. God is often better than His word: His performances never fall beneath His promises, but frequently transcend them. The true minister, like the rod of Aaron, is fruitful. His life and work are blessed by God to the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers in Christ, and the leading of the young into the faith and service of the Lord Jesus. He is useful in quickening holy thoughts and noble purposes, in training souls for spiritual service, and in leading them in such service. He is not only alive himself, his ministry is life-giving to others. (c)

II. The origin of the true Christian ministry.

The transformation of the rod of Aaron was the work of God. We have an extraordinary manifestation of the Divine power in giving life to this piece of dead wood, and causing it to put forth buds, blossoms, and fruit. It was unquestionably a supernatural achievement. The attributes of a true minister of Jesus Christ are gifts of God. *Spiritual life* is His gift. "Born of the Spirit." "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." *Spiritual beauty* is bestowed by God. It is "the beauty of the Lord

our God upon us." We are being transformed into the image of the Lord, "from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." "The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation." *Spiritual fruitfulness* is also the gift of God. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me," &c. (John xv. 4, 5.) "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" &c. (1 Cor. iii. 5-7.) Thus every true minister is a creation of God, and a gift of God to His Church.

III. The influence of the true Christian ministry.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept," &c. Thus this rod was to remain, and to continue to exercise a beneficent influence in repressing the disposition of the Israelites to murmur against the servants of the Lord. In like manner the true Christian ministry and its fruits are abiding things; and the manifestation of those fruits is calculated to silence murmurers and detractors. The holiest and most useful ministers may be assailed by detraction and even by cruel slander, as Aaron was; but his life and work will in due time silence the detractors and cover them with shame. The results of the life and work of the true minister will be the most effective vindication of his Divine call, and will "put to silence the ignorance of foolish" and wicked men.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no one entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word indicating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the

wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession—namely, to convert life into truth—he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed, and planted, and talked, and bought, and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches; his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse that he had ever lived at all. Not a line did he draw out of real history. The true preacher can always be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the



fire of thought. But of the bad preacher, it could not be told from his sermon what age of the world he fell in; whether he had a father or a child; whether he was a freeholder or a pauper; whether he was a citizen, or any other fact in his history.—*R. W. Emerson.*

For the spiritual being, man, the only real life is in goodness. Can it not be proved so? If the fountain of all the life that flows through the fields of the universe is God, God is but another name for goodness. All the life that proceeds from Him, therefore, must be according to goodness or love, whether it beats in the bosom of a sinless child, or nerves the arm of a hero-saint; whether He rounds a planet, or tints a roseleaf; whether He balances the Pleiades in their spheres, or adjusts the microscopic machinery of an insect's wing; whether the afflatus of His Spirit bears up the "seraph that adores and burns" before the throne, or lights the lamp of a feeblar reason in these vessels of clay. Only so far as we share in the Father's goodness, then, are we partakers in His life. The measure of our being, as living souls, is precisely the measure of our excellence. In proportion as our actions are in harmony with Divine laws, and our familiar frame of feeling with God's will, we live. Herein is the Apostolic saying true, "To be spiritually-minded is life." Every rising-up of pure aspiration; every clinging to principle when you are tempted; every choice of abstract right above politic selfishness; every putting down of sensual passion by prayer; every preference of a truth which inherits a cross, over the lie that flatters you with a promise of prosperity—is a palpable motion of God's life within you. Indeed, this is the most intimate subjective knowledge you have of God. God, out of His express revelation, never speaks to us so audibly as when His Spirit prompts us to struggle, or braces us for a sacrifice. A generous impulse is the plainest pledge of His presence; a devout trust in Him, the mightiest demonstration of His Fatherhood.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which Heaven has given him, that will ac-

complish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives with all the force of his nature for the glory of God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) Beauty and love ought always to go together. In the highest moral realm, in the noblest moral traits, there should be the beautiful. Religion is itself beautiful. Its fragments, like shining particles of gold, are beautiful; but at every stage and step of its development toward moral perfection, it grows in the direction of beauty, and the highest conception of beauty is in character. Physical beauty is but the outward symbol and the lower representation of that which has its true existence only in spiritual elements. Religion is beautiful, because it is the service of the God of beauty. Its inward and characteristic experiences are full of beauty.—*H. W. Beecher.*

A true man after Christ will be the most noble and beautiful thing upon the earth—the freest, the most joyous, the most fruitful in all goodness. There is no picture that was ever painted, there is no statue that was ever carved, there was no work of art ever conceived of that was half so beautiful as is a living man, thoroughly developed on the pattern of Christ Jesus.—*Ibid.*

(c) Vitality is a test of any system of doctrine, as it is of any teacher's qualification. If you would find the value of any message, ask of it, Does it live? Do vital pulses leap through it? Does it reproduce its life? Does it help men to live? Does it leave them more alive or more dead than they were without it? Get an answer to these questions, and you will find whether the given ministry is of heaven, or of a private self-interest—whether it comes out of the all-quickening and all-comprehending God, or out of some dreamer's brain.

Nothing goes with much momentum, in the long trial, that does not carry life with it. Accumulate the learning of a thousand Melancthons; pile together the erudition of ancient schools and modern universities; what does it contribute to the real treasure of men, if it does not create life in them? The alcoves of libraries may be but the chambers of a mausoleum,—sepulchres of thought, instead of nurseries—and meeting houses, spiritual dormitories. Eloquence, burning as Peter the Hermit's, is wasted breath, unless the succeeding life of men shows that it reached the springs from which that life was fed. So in all communication of man with man. Nothing tells, nothing does execution, nothing survives very long, but what makes men feel and will and act,—nothing but the "word of life." Find me a book, a speech, a preacher, a gospel, that is not life-giving, and I know there is no true message, no inspiration, no revelation from God there.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

## THE BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD.

(Verse 8.)

## Notice—

I. The threefold significance of the rods which were laid to settle the question in dispute.

1. They were *historic*. The rods of the tribes were handed down from one generation to another, outliving many generations, and reminding the men of the present of the events of the past, as the mace of a city in England calls up to our minds events which have been connected with it in the past.

2. They were *representative*. They represented every man of the tribe as a mace represents every citizen, or as the heraldic sign of a noble house represents each member of the house, and the number upon the colour of each regiment represents each soldier in the regiment.

3. The rod was a sign of *personal authority* when borne by the man who alone was entitled to carry it—the head of the tribe. The macebearer derives no authority from bearing the sign of it, but in the hands of the chief magistrate it is an emblem of official power. The coronet in the hands, or even upon the head, of a commoner, means nothing; but it means rank upon the brow of him to whom it rightfully belongs.

II. Aaron's rod represented more remarkable historic events, and signified more authority, than the rods belonging to the heads of the other tribes.

It is generally supposed to have been the rod used by him and by Moses in the performance of the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness (comp. Exod. vii. 9, 19, &c.). It was, therefore, connected with a miracle in the past—it had been alive. And it signified an authority not derived from birth (Exod. vi. 16-20), but conferred by the special selection of God. The present miraculous manifestation may suggest—

1. *That the creation of life is the highest manifestation of Divine power.* Miracles of increase may to some extent find an analogy in the works of man when he works in co-operation with the established laws of nature. He sows a seed and reaps thirty-fold, and so on. But there is life in the seed to work upon. The giving of life to the dead can in no way be imitated by man. The character of this miracle, therefore, seems intended—

2. *To vindicate most forcibly the right of God to decide who should be, not only the head of the tribe of Levi, but the priestly head of the entire nation.* He who could thus dispense with all the seasons in the production of the flowers and fruit upon the rod, had a right to set aside the ordinary laws of primogeniture. God is not handcuffed by either His natural or social laws. He can break all laws except those of moral rectitude. To violate *them* is His blessed impossibility.

3. It may further suggest that *the choice of God would be justified in the after history of Israel.* The choice for special service begins with God. The selection of an earthly ambassador springs, not from himself, but from the king who sends him. So the Saviour and King of men said to His ambassadors, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." But His choice was justified by their "bringing forth fruit which remained" (John xv. 16). So the choice of Aaron's family was justified by the fruit which some members brought forth to bless the nation. Their faith and courage in entering Jordan, the zeal of Phinehas (Num. xxv. 7), &c., were typified in the budding and fruit-bearing rod which was their symbol.—From "*Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament.*"

THE BUDDED ROD, A TYPE OF CHRIST.

(Verse 8.)

Let us advance from the ancient record to the still-living Gospel of the fact. The Rod in many graphic tints shows Jesus. The very name is caught by raptured prophets—Isa. xi. 1; Zech. vi. 12, 13. Thus faith gleans lessons from the very title—Rod.

But the grand purport of the type is to reject all rivals. It sets Aaron alone upon the priestly seat. The parallel proclaims, that similarly Jesus is our only Priest. God calls—anoints—appoints—accepts, and ever hears Him; but Him alone. In His hands only do these functions live.

Next, the constant luxuriance has a clear voice. In nature's field, buds—blossoms—fruit, soon wither. Not so this Rod. Its verdure was for ever green; its fruit was ever ripe. Beside the Ark it was reserved in never-fading beauty. Here is the ever-blooming Priesthood of our Lord. Psa. cx. 4; Heb. vii. 24. . . . Because Christ ever lives, and ever loves, and ever prays, and ever works, therefore His kingdom swells. And so it shall be while the need remains. But when the last of the redeemed is safely gathered in, then heaven shall no more hear the interceding Priest. Then the one

sound from the vast throng shall be—Hallelujah.

Mark, moreover, that types of Jesus often comprehend the Church. It is so with these rods. The twelve at first seem all alike. They are all sapless twigs. But suddenly one puts forth loveliness; while the others still remain worthless and withered. Here is a picture of God's dealings with a sin-slain race. Since Adam's fall, all are born lifeless branches of a withered stock. When any child of man arises from the death of sin, and blooms in grace, God has arisen with Divine almightiness.

Believer, the Budded Rod gives another warning. It is a picture of luxuriance. Turn from it and look inward. Is your soul thus richly fertile? Instead of fruit, you often yield the thorn. John xv. 8. Whence is the fault? John xv. 4. Perhaps your neglectful soul departs from Christ. Meditate in God's law day and night, and you "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water," &c. Psa. i. 3.

But if the Budded Rod rebukes the scanty fruit in the new-born soul, what is its voice to unregenerate worldlings? Heb. vi. 8.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

THE CRY OF THE SUBDUED REBELS.

(Verses 12, 13.)

This last miraculous interposition, coming after the preceding judgments, awakened a salutary dread in the minds of the rebellious people, and led them to cry to Moses in great bitterness of spirit, "Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish," &c. This cry of theirs suggests the following observations:—

I. That sinners are prone to pass from one extreme of evil to the opposite one.

A little while ago they went to the extreme of presumption, now they are

in the extreme of despair. "See," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the folly and extravagance of this sinful people. At first, every person might come near to God, for all, they thought, were sufficiently holy, and every way qualified to minister in holy things. Now, no one, in their apprehension, can come near to the tabernacle without being consumed (ver. 13). In both cases they were wrong; some there were who might approach, others there were who might not. God had put the difference. His decision should



have been final with them; but sinners are ever running into extremes." "In the preceding events," says Scott, "they 'despised the chastening of the Lord;' and now they fainted when rebuked by Him." For another instance of their swift transition from one sinful extreme to another, comp. chap. xiv. 1-5, with 40-45.

II. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission, while the heart remains as rebellious as ever.

These Israelites were subdued, but they were not penitent. They do not recognise the fact that the thousands who perished, perished because of their sins; they do not confess their own sins. Their cry is that of a people who are painfully conscious that they have to do with a Being against whose judgments they cannot stand; but who evidently feel themselves injured by those judgments. Their cry was really a complaint against God. They felt themselves unable to cope with Him, and, therefore, yielded an unwilling submission to Him. Law and judgment may subdue rebellion, but they cannot enkindle loyalty; they may compel to submission, but they cannot convert to affection. It is only love that can do this.

III. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission while the mind entertains most erroneous moral opinions.

The people cried, "Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." They are still in

error. They have renounced the error, that all men might approach the tabernacle, but they have adopted the error that no one might approach unto it. There were those who might come near unto it; the priests might do so; it was their business to do so. And all might avail themselves of the offices of the priests; and were under solemn obligations to do so. But the judgments which they had experienced had not taught them this. Under the judgments of God men are not in a fit state for learning much concerning their relation to Him. And judgments are neither designed nor fitted to teach much, except man's utter inability to withstand God. Judgments are for correction rather than instruction. They have been used with effect for the destruction of the false and evil, but they are not fitted for building up the true and good. It was correction that Israel most needed when they were visited by these judgments. They persistently refused instruction. And, as is remarked by Keil and Del., "if this fear of death was no fruit of faith, it was fitted for all that to prevent any fresh outbreaks of rebellion on the part of the rejected generation."

IV. The most stout-hearted rebels against God must, sooner or later, submit to Him.

If they will not submit willingly, they will be compelled into submission. Comp. Job. ix. 3, 4; xl. 9; xxii. 21; Psa. i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 25. (a)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord to be vulnerable, yet where is the bow and where the arrow that could reach Him on His throne? What javelin shall pierce Jehovah's buckler? Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage against God, how shall they reach His throne? They cannot even shake his footstool. If all the angels of heaven should rebel against the Great King, and their squadrons should advance in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most High, He has but to will it and they would wither as autumn leaves, or consume as the fat upon the altar. Reserved in chains of darkness, the opponents of his power would for ever

become mementoes of His wrath. None can touch Him; He is the God that ever liveth. Let us who delight in the living God bow before Him, and humbly worship Him as the God in whom we live and move and have our being.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

As you stood some stormy day upon a sea-cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back to the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling

athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its course? Still more foolish and vain his thoughts, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purpose of God, saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us!" Break His bands asunder! How He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh!—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Prosperity is not found in opposing God. It is only by *falling in* with His arrangements and following His designs. A prosperous voyage is made by falling in with winds and currents, and not in opposing them; prosperous agriculture is carried on with coinciding with the favourable seasons of the year, and taking advantage of the dews, and rains, and sunbeams that God sends, and not in

opposing them; prosperity in regard to health is found in taking advantage of the means which God gives to secure it, and not in opposing them. And the sinner in his course has no more chance of success and prosperity, than a man would have who should make it a point or principle of life always to sail against tides, and currents, and head-winds; or he who should set at defiance all the laws of husbandry, and plant on a rock, or in the dead of winter; or he who should feed himself on poison rather than on nutritious food, and cultivate the nightshade rather than wheat. If a man desires prosperity, he *must* fall in with the arrangements of God in His providence and grace; and wisdom is seen in studying these arrangements, and in yielding to them.—*Albert Barnes, D.D.*

## THE RUIN AND THE REMEDY.

(Verses 12 and 13.)

This was the language of desperation, remorse, and enmity to God. Israel had deeply transgressed and hardened themselves in transgression, and a just God had repeatedly visited them in wrath. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, had been swallowed up, and 250 men bearing impious fire had been consumed, and the surviving rebels said,—“Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” When further punished, crushed, but not humbled, again they murmur against God, as in the text.

Affecting description of the ravages of sin and death. Let us consider—

### I. The devastations of death.

A true picture of all mankind—“Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish—we are consumed with dying.”

1. *Sad universal picture.* True in all ages, countries, climes. Death is universal and unavoidable: no exemption, old and young, strong and weak, rich and poor, tyrant and oppressor, the wise man and the fool—all die. Same phenomena, sickness, pain, suffering, decay—in all lands. (Job xiv. 1, 2, &c.; Isa. xxxviii. 12; xl. 6-8.) How many gone from among us, and we are hasting after them, and soon shall be with them.

2. *And whither are they gone?* Ask the philosopher, the sceptic, the Deist—

they cannot tell you—they have no comfort for you: perhaps your departed ones are annihilated, or they wander in other bodies, or are absorbed in Deity! Ah! man without God's Word knows nothing of the future.

They are in the separate state—they have begun to be eternally happy or miserable—eternal woes or eternal bliss—a second death—oh! terrible: the first death is sad, but what is the second? “Where their worm never dies,” &c.

II. The cause of these widespread desolations of death.

Again ask the philosopher, the philanthropist, the disbeliever in the Scripture account of it—Why all this misery, pain, death? How do you reconcile it with a God of benevolence? They are silent. Our answer is one word—“*Sin*”—“our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa. lxiv. 6.)

1. *This world is a penal state.* A fact much overlooked. It so far resembles the future world of suffering, with this difference—*this* world is both penal and probationary, *that* is penal only. *But this world is a state of punishment*—we are born into it under the curse and wrath of God—and every pain, sorrow, grief—bodily, mental, spiritual—is a

punishment for original sin, or the effect of actual sin. "We die, we perish, we all perish," because we sin, we all sin. Universal death proves universal sin; because death is the penalty of sin. (Rom. v. 12.) Almost all men hasten death and shorten their lives by sin. It peoples gaols and madhouses, and feeds the tomb. (Rom. vi. 23.) The mortal wound—"sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) "Brings forth death." (James i. 15.)

2. *Alas, this, too, peoples hell!* "The wicked turned into hell." (Psa. ix. 17; Matt. xxiii. 33; 2 Pet. ii. 4.) First death only dark portal to the second.

III. The remedy for this widespread desolation of sin and death.

It was that very "tabernacle" which these frightened, but desperate sinners dreaded. There only was their refuge; there the mercy-seat; there the propitiation—the sacrificing priest, the altar, and a sin-forgiving God above it. Yet they said, "Whosoever cometh near the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." And perhaps they were right—for as of the Gospel it typified, so the tabernacle was a means of life or death, according as it was approached—"of life unto life, or of death unto death." (2 Cor. ii. 16.) But there was no other refuge, no other salvation.

*Now Christ is our true tabernacle.* (Heb. viii. 2.) "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) "He hath abolished death." (2 Tim. i. 10.) He has offered one sacrifice for sins. (Heb. x. 12.) He is our "Apostle and High Priest;" our living "Advocate with the Father." (1 John ii. 1.)

*Here is the universal remedy—Christ*

Jesus the Lord—He is "the tree, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 2.) "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "He healeth broken hearts"—"wipes tears from sorrowing faces"—lights up the grave with joy—makes men "long to depart" that they may "be with Him." By faith in Him His people rejoice in tribulation—count temptations "all joy"—heavy burdens are lightened, long troubles shortened and sweetened: and they have "a hope full of immortality." Well has He said, "Oh death, I will be thy plagues!" (Hos. xiii. 14.)

*With what view do you regard Almighty God?*—as terrible, revengeful, cruel, relentless? Do you read these attributes in the present miseries of the world? Do the promised miseries of another world confirm them? Does the language of the text suit you? Then it is because *you do not know God*. Conscious guilt and dread of punishment we have in common with devils who "believe and tremble;" but only repent, humble your proud hearts, lay low that unbelieving spirit, and seek mercy through the Son of His love, and then you "shall see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Some men will "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" but if you "flee from the wrath to come," and lay hold on the all-sufficient Saviour, you shall taste the sweetness of His mercy.

Let all who know Him, and love Him, cleave unto Him in His tabernacle, His mercy-seat; they shall find His name "Love," and shall rejoice before Him.—*F. Close, D.D.*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people recorded at the close of the preceding chapter. And after the confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his family, these Divine directions as to the duties

and emoluments of the Priests and Levites come in very appropriately. The greater part of these directions were addressed by the Lord directly to Aaron (vers. 1-24). But the regulations as to the tithes to be paid by the Levites



to the Priests were addressed to Moses, as the head of all Israel (vers. 25-32).

Verse 1. *The iniquity of the sanctuary.* "i.e., the guilt of the offences which an erring people would be continually committing against the majesty of God, when brought into contact, through the ordinances, with the manifestations of His presence. Cf. Exodus xxviii. 38; also viii. 19."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*The iniquity of your priesthood.* "As the priests themselves were but men, they could no more than others abide it, if God were extreme to mark what was done amiss. An atonement was consequently ordained for them (Lev. xvi.); and they were strengthened to bear the iniquity of their own unintentional offences, by being entrusted with the ceremonial means of taking it away. The word 'bear' has, in the Old Testament, this double sense of 'enduring' and 'removing'; but in the person of Christ, who atoned by His own endurance, the two are in effect one."—*Ibid.*

*And thy father's house with thee.* "The father's house of Aaron, i.e., the Levitical family of Kohath, was also to join in bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, because the oversight of the holy vessels of the sanctuary devolved upon it (chap. iv. 4, sqq.).—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 2. *Thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi . . . may be joined unto thee.* "There is a fine paronomasia, or play upon words, in the original. *Levi* comes from the root *lavah*, to join to, couple, associate: hence Moses says, the *Levites*, *yillavni*, shall be joined or associated with the priests; they shall conjointly perform the whole of the sacred office, but the priests shall be *principal*, the Levites only their *associates* or *assistants*."—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 4. *A stranger, i.e., everyone who was neither a priest nor a Levite.* Comp. chap. i. 53; iii. 7.

Verse 5. *Ye shall keep, &c. Ye, viz., Aaron and his sons.*

Verse 7. *I have given your priest's office, &c.* "This office, which brought them into the closest fellowship with the Lord, was a favour accorded to

them by the grace of God. This is expressed in the words, 'as a service of gift (a service with which I present you) I give you the priesthood.'"—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 8. *By reason of the anointing.* Keil and Del. *et al.* translate, "for a portion."

Verse 10. *In the most holy place, i.e., "in the court of the tabernacle (see Lev. vi. 9, 19; vii. 6), which is called 'most holy' here, to lay a stronger emphasis upon the precept."*—*Keil and Del.*

*Every male.* Only the males of the priestly families could eat of the things mentioned in ver. 9.

Verse 11. *To thy sons and to thy daughters.* Both the males and females of the priestly families, provided they were legally clean, might eat of the things mentioned in this verse.

Verse 15. *Surely redeem . . . . redeem.* "A stronger expression is intentionally used in reference to the redemption of the first-born of man than in reference to that of unclean beasts. For the rule as to the former admitted of no exception: the owner of the latter, if unwilling to redeem, might destroy the beasts (Exod. xiii. 13; xxxiv. 20). Usually, of course, he would redeem them, but in the case of a diseased or maimed animal he might well be excused from making a payment for that which, if redeemed, would be worthless. As to the mode of redemption of unclean beasts, it had been originally enjoined that the firstling of an ass should be redeemed with a lamb. But the owner of the beast might not be always able to provide a lamb, especially in the wilderness, and the liability was accordingly commuted (Lev. xxvii. 27). Into all the details of this the present ordinances do not enter. Their object is not so much to prescribe accurately to the people what should be paid, as to assign to the priests their various revenues."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *A covenant of salt.* "That is, an incorruptible everlasting covenant. As salt was added to different kinds of viands, not only to give them

a relish, but to preserve them from putrefaction and decay, it became the emblem of *incorruptibility* and *permanence*. Hence, a *covenant of salt* signified an *everlasting covenant*. Among the Asiatics, eating together was considered a bond of perpetual friendship; and as *salt* was a common article in all their repasts, it may be in reference to this circumstance that a perpetual covenant is termed a *covenant of salt*; because the parties ate together of the sacrifice offered on the occasion, and the whole transaction was considered as a league of endless friendship. See Lev. ii. 13."—*A. Clarke, LL D.*

Verse 20. Comp. Deut. x. 9; xviii. 1, 2; Josh. xiii. 33. "No tract of land was peculiarly assigned to them, as were to the other tribes, as fields nor vineyards; they had fields appointed them, and they had houses and cities devoted to the Lord which fell to them, and others they had by gift or legacy, or by purchase, as had Jeremiah, the priest, and Barnabas, the Levite, Jer. xxxii. 9; and Acts iv. 36, 37; but they

had no share in the distribution of the land of Canaan at the time of the division of it among the tribes; no, not even in the spoil of the cities of the land of Canaan when they were conquered."—*Evang. Synopsis.*

Verse 21. Comp. Lev. xxvii. 31-33; Neh. x. 37; xii. 44.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. chap. i. 53 and viii. 19.

Verse 26. The Levites are here commanded to give to the priests, as an offering to the Lord, a tithe of the tithes which they received.

Verse 27. *Shall be reckoned, &c.* "That is, it should be as acceptable to God as if they had fields and vineyards, threshing-floors and wine-presses, of their own, from whence corn and wine were taken."—*Dr. Gill.*

Verse 29. *Of all the best thereof.* Heb. as in margin, "Of all the fat."

Verse 32. *Neither shall ye pollute, &c.* "Rather, 'And by not polluting the holy things of the children of Israel, ye shall not die.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

### A GRAVE PERIL AND A GRACIOUS PRECAUTION.

(Verses 1-7.)

Two preliminary points:

First: *Here is the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people.* The inquiry concerning the approach to the tabernacle of the Lord, with which the preceding chapter closes, receives a clear response in the paragraph now before us. Man may draw near to God, but it must be in the way which He has appointed. Mic. vi. 6-8; John xiv. 6.

Second: *Here is a solemn reminder to Aaron that his great honours involved great responsibilities.* The Lord had abundantly vindicated his priesthood, and now He reminds him of the serious responsibilities of his charge. "Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear," &c. (ver. 1). "And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary," &c. (ver. 5). Wherefore let them "not be high-minded, but fear." (See pp. 32, 33.) (a)

Let us now consider—

I. The grave peril referred to.

There was danger that the wrath of God might be again kindled against them by reason of—

1. *Sin in relation to consecrated places and things.* No one was to come nigh unto these except upon such occasions as were permitted by God, *e.g.*, when bringing their sacrifices to the priests, &c. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Korah and his company had sinned in this way, and they were consumed by "fire from the Lord." Aaron and his sons, with the Levites as assistants, must bear the responsibility of the charge of the sacred places and things. As with the Israelites there was danger of sin by unwarranted approach to the tabernacle; so our best services are imper-

fect; even our worship is marred by wandering thoughts and lukewarm affections; our religious exercises need the merits of the gracious Saviour. (b)

2. *Sin in consecrated persons.* "The Lord said unto Aaron, . . . Thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver. 1). The holiest of men in the holiest office is, in the present state, exposed to temptation, and liable to sin, and stands constantly in need of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (c)

Sin, whether in priests or in people, is a perilous thing; it issues in death (James i. 15); it kindles the wrath of God. "Sin and punishment," says Trapp, "come under one name, as being tied together with chains of adamant: where the one dines the other will sup; where the one is in the saddle, the other will be upon the crupper. *Nemo crimen gerit in pectore qui non idem Nemesis in tergo.* Sin doth as naturally draw and suck judgments to it, as the loadstone doth iron, or turpentine fire."

II. The gracious precaution against this peril.

By appointing the priests and Levites to the charge of the consecrated places and things; by appointing to them means of atonement for sin (Lev. xvi.); and by solemnly warning the people against intruding into sacred places or intermeddling with sacred duties, the Lord endeavours to guard them against the perils to which they were exposed. But there are several particulars which call for notice:—

1. *The Divine distribution of duty.* To the priests and the Levites respectively certain duties were allotted (comp. chaps. iii. and iv., and see pp. 48, 49, 56, 57).

2. *The Divine recognition of differences of rank amongst men.* The Levites, though brethren to the priests, were to serve them. They shall "be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee." Differences of rank are inevitable amongst men. (See pp. 12, 13.) The Church of Christ is no exception

in this. (See p. 48.) As the Levites were to serve under Aaron, so Christians work under Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest. (d)

3. *In the differences of rank the common brotherhood of all must not be lost sight of.* Though servants to the priests, the Levites were their brethren. "Thy brethren" (ver. 2); "your brethren the Levites" (ver. 6). In the Christian Church differences of rank do not invalidate the brotherhood of all. The elders of the Church are not to be "lords over God's heritage." "One is your master, Christ; and all ye are brethren." Even "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (e)

4. *Men of every rank are called to service.* The priests must serve; so also must the Levites; and those who belonged to neither of these orders were called to serve in other departments of the national life. From the highest to the lowest no one was exempted from this obligation. (See pp. 13, 56, 57.)

5. *Each must faithfully fulfil his own service, and abstain from intrusion into the province of others.* The Levites were not to interfere with priestly duties: "They shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die." They who were neither priests nor Levites were to abstain from all the sacred functions connected with the tabernacle. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." No one must intermeddle with duties which belonged not to him. An excellent rule for all times and places.

6. *The faithful discharge of appointed duty promotes the safety of the entire people.* "Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel." The welfare of the whole community is affected beneficially or injuriously by the conduct of each member of it. The faithfulness of even the feeblest and most obscure member contributes to the security and prosperity of the entire commonwealth. (f)



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The greater the trust is of work and power that is committed to us the greater is our danger of contracting guilt, by falsifying and betraying that trust. This is a good reason why we should neither be envious at others' honours nor ambitious ourselves of high places, because great dignity exposes us to great iniquity. Those that are entrusted with the charge of the sanctuary will have a great deal to answer for. Who would have the care of souls who considers the account that must be given of that care?—*Matthew Henry*.

(b) The temple itself is full of vacant worship. It resounds with rash vows and babbling voices. It is the house of God; but man has made it a nest of triflers, a fair of vanity, a den of thieves. Some come to it, as reckless and irreverent as if they were stepping into a neighbour's house. Some come to it, and feel as if they had laid the most High under obligation, because they bring a sheaf of corn or a pair of pigeons; whilst they never listen to God's Word, nor strive after that obedience which is better than sacrifice. Some come, and rattle over empty forms of devotion, as if they would be heard because of their *much* speaking. And some, in a fit of fervour, utter vows which they forget to pay; and, when reminded of their promise by the "angel" of the church, they protest that there must be some mistake: they repudiate the vow, and say it was an error.—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

(c) As a man who in the morning washeth his hands, and goes abroad about his business and affairs in the world, though he doth not puddle in the mire, or rake among dunghills, yet when he returns home again to dinner, or at night, if he wash, he finds that he hath contracted some uncleanness and that his hands are foul: we cannot converse in an unclean and dirty world with our bodies, but some uncleanness will fasten upon them. So it is with the soul; the souls of the best, of the purest, of the holiest, though they do not rake in the dunghill, and wallow in the mire of sin basely and filthily, yet they do from day to day, yea, from moment to moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. And in this sense it is that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not." Every man hath a "fountain of uncleanness" in him; and there will be ever some sin, some filthiness bubbling and boiling up, if not flowing forth.—*Caryl*.

(d) The Levites were to serve under Aaron, the head of the priestly house. This teaches us a fine lesson, and one much needed by Christians at the present moment. We all want to bear in mind that service, to be intelligent and acceptable, must be rendered in subjection to priestly authority and guidance. The whole tribe of workers were associated with and subject to the high priest. All was under his immediate control and guidance. So must it be now in reference to all God's workers. All Christian service must be rendered in fellowship with our Great High Priest, and in holy subjection

to His authority. It is of no value otherwise. There may be a great deal of work done, there may be a great deal of activity; but if Christ be not the immediate object before the heart, if His guidance and authority be not fully owned, the work must go for nothing. But, on the other hand, the smallest act of service, the meanest work done under the eye of Christ, done with direct reference to Him, has its value in God's estimation, and shall most assuredly receive its due reward. This is truly encouraging, and consolatory to the heart of every earnest worker. The Levites had to work under Aaron. Christians have to work under Christ. We are responsible to Him.—*Anon*.

(e) You recognise in every nation, in every tribe, your fellow men, your brethren. Go to Egypt, and stand among the Sphinxes, the Pyramids, the old and wondrous temples, and you are a stranger in a strange land, and it seems scarcely less than a ghastly dream. Go farther East, behold the ruined architecture, revive the manners and customs of the Syrian and Babylonian empires, and you seem still among a strange people. If they should rise and speak to you, their tongues would be as strange to you as yours would be to them. But let a maiden speak her love, and instantly you know that voice. The works that their hands wrought are wondrous. The affections that throb in their hearts are familiar. The things that they lived for outwardly—see how widely you are separated from these. How different are their laws, their institutions, and their methods of commerce from ours! How strange to us are their political economy and their ecclesiastical system! Touch that which man fashioned and formed, and man is disjointed, and split apart by rivers, and mountains, and times, and ages; but touch the human heart, and let that speak, and all men rise up and say, "That voice is my voice." Reach but the feeling of love, and every human being says, "It is my brother; it is my sister." Strike those cords that bring out the experience of grief, and every man wails with the hoary wailers of antiquity. Man is not a unit by virtue of the fruits of his intellect and the works of his hand, but by virtue of those eternal identities of sentiment and affection which are common to all men in all nations and ages.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(f) No man has a right to say he can do nothing for the benefit of mankind, who are less benefited by ambitious projects than by the sober fulfilment of each man's proper duties. By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor. The results of "patient continuance in well-doing" are never to be measured by the weakness of the instrument, but by the omnipotence of Him who bleaseth the sincere efforts of obedient faith alike in the prince and in the cottager.—*H. Thompson*.

THE FIDELITY OF ONE, THE SAFETY OF MANY.

(Verse 5.)

This applies—

I. To ministers of the Gospel, who are—

1. To preach the whole truth.  
2. To guard the ordinances of religion.

3. To urge the performance of duty, that the people of their charge may be saved from sin and wrath.

II. To civil rulers,

Who are to make and enforce laws to maintain and increase the tone of public morality.

III. To heads of families,

Who, by example and precept, should seek to form good characters and correct evil habits in their children and servants.

*An illustration of fidelity.*—The fidelity of the keepers of the lighthouse once

on Minet's Ledge, near Boston, may well be imitated. In the terrible April gale of 1851, this beautiful structure was destroyed. Two men were in it at the time; and a vast multitude were gathered upon the shore, waiting, in anxious distress, for the expected catastrophe. Every hour, however, the bell tolled the time, and ever the light pierced the dark raging storm, and bid the sailor beware. No howling blast could silence the one, or rising wave extinguish the other. At last, one giant wave, mightier than the rest, rose up and threw its arms around the tower, and laid it low in the waves. Then alone was the bell silent; then alone did the light cease to shine.—*J. M. Reid.—Biblical Museum.*

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 8-32.)

The main subject of this portion of the history has already engaged our attention (see pp. 84-86); but there are additional matters brought before us here which demand notice.

The Redemption of the Firstborn (vers. 15, 16) has also been already noticed by us (see pp. 59, 60).

“These regulations concerning the revenues of the priests and Levites were in perfect accordance with the true idea of the Israelitish Kingdom of God. Whereas in heathen states, where there was an hereditary priestly caste, that caste was generally a rich one, and held a firm possession in the soil (in Egypt, for example; see at Gen. xlvii. 22), the Levites received no hereditary landed property in the land of Israel, but only towns to dwell in among the other tribes, with pasturage for their cattle (chap. xxxv.), because Jehovah, the

God of Israel, would be their inheritance. In this way their earthly existence was based upon the spiritual ground and soil of faith, in accordance with the calling assigned them, to be the guardians and promoters of the commandments, statutes, and rights of Jehovah; and their authority and influence among the people were bound up with their unreserved surrender of themselves to the Lord, and their firm reliance upon the possession of their God. Now, whilst this position was to be a constant incitement to the Levites to surrender themselves entirely to the Lord and His service, it was also to become to the whole nation a constant admonition, inasmuch as it was a prerogative conferred upon them by the Lord, to seek the highest of all good in the possession of the Lord, as its portion and inheritance.”—*Keil and Del.*

The following observations are suggested—

I. That the maintenance of the Christian ministry devolves upon the Christian Church.

This nation of Israelites was separated unto the Lord, and is thus an illustration of the Church. God ordained that the priests and Levites should be supported by the nation; the Christian ministry should be supported by the Christian Church.

1. *This is righteous.* The priests and Levites were required to renounce the paths of worldly ambition and profit; they had no share in the inheritance of the children of Israel (vers. 20, 24); they were to devote themselves unreservedly to the promotion of the religious interests of the people. Inasmuch as they gave their time, their strength, &c., to serve the people, the people could not neglect to provide for them without dishonesty. The Christian minister has a right to a liberal maintenance from the church which he serves. What the Lord said to the Levites might be said to ministers to day respecting the provision made for them, "It is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 31). (a)

2. *This is advantageous.* It promotes the prosperity of the Church. (See pp. 85, 86.)

3. *This is scriptural.* Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7-14; Gal. vi. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

II. That Christian ministers of every grade who are devoted to the service of the Church have a right to support from the Church.

God gives directions for the worthy support of the high priest, the priests, and their servants, the Levites, also. The claims of the poor, hard-working curate upon the Church for a respectable maintenance are, in the sight of God, as binding as those of the wealthy and lordly bishop. The claims of many of the most faithful and useful ministers, who are working in inconspicuous spheres, are most sadly and sinfully overlooked by the Christian Church. (b)

III. That the Christian ministry

should be supported liberally by the Church.

"The revenue which the Lord assigned to the Levites and priests, as His servants, consisting of the tenths and firstfruits, as well as certain portions of the different sacrificial gifts that were offered to Him, appears to have been a very considerable one, especially if we adopt the computation of J. D. Michaelis (*Mos. Recht.* i. § 52) with reference to the tithes. 'A tribe,' he says, 'which had only 22,000 males in it (23,000 afterwards), and therefore could hardly have numbered more than 12,000 grown up men, received the tithes of 600,000 Israelites; consequently one single Levite, without the slightest necessity for sowing, and without any of the expenses of agriculture, reaped or received from the produce of the flocks and herds as much as five of the other Israelites.' But this leaves out of sight the fact that tithes are never paid so exactly as this, and that no doubt there was as little conscientiousness in the matter then as there is at the present day, when those who are entitled to receive a tenth often receive even less than a twentieth. Moreover, the revenue of the tribe which the Lord had chosen as His own peculiar possession, was not intended to be a miserable and beggarly one; but it was hardly equal, at any time, to the revenues which the priestly castes of other nations derived from their endowments."—*Keil and Del.* It is deplorable that the Christian Church, with its richer spiritual heritage, should fall so far below the Jewish Church in this respect.

IV. That all the members of the Church should contribute to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every one who brought a sacrifice contributed a portion of the same to the priests, and those who had children or cattle contributed the firstborn, and those who cultivated the soil presented the choicest of their productions and the firstfruits, and to the Levites all the tithes were given. So that, in one way or another, all contributed to the



support of the priests and Levites. And surely the principle is just that all who receive the services of the Christian ministry should contribute to its support. (c)

V. That all should contribute proportionally to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every Israelite contributed a tenth of his possessions to the cause of God. The rule for the Christian should be, "Every man according to his ability." "As God hath prospered him." "Freely ye have received, freely give." (d)

VI. That out of their maintenance Christian ministers should offer a portion to the Lord. (Verses 25-29.)

"The Levites had to give up the tenth of all the tithes they received to the priests; and the priests were to offer to Jehovah upon the altar a portion of the firstfruits, heave-offerings, and wave offerings that were assigned to them. Consequently, as the whole nation was to make a practical acknow-

ledgment, in the presentation of the tithe and firstfruits, that it had received its hereditary property as a fief from the Lord its God, so the Levites, by their payment of the tenth to the priests, and the priests, by presenting a portion of their revenues upon the altar, were to make a practical confession that they had received all their revenues from the Lord their God, and owed Him praise and adoration in return (see *Bahr, Symbolik*, ii. pp. 43 sqq.).—*Keil and Del.* And the Christian minister, being liberally maintained by the Church, should be an example of liberality, honouring God and doing good to men with his temporal goods.

#### Application :—

1. Let the Church recognise and do its duty in relation to the ministry; and do it as unto the Lord, and then it will become a privilege.

2. Let ministers be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their duties, &c.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You listen to a minister suspiciously because he is paid for preaching. Very good. I only insist upon your being consistent throughout; then what will happen? When you are drowning, you will ask the life-boat men whether they are paid for their services, and on being told that they live by their occupation, you will nobly perish in the deep. When your house is in flames, you will demand, notwithstanding the stifling smoke and cracking timbers, whether the fire-escape men are paid for their work, and on learning that they have a pound a week, you will embrace the flames with a martyr's rapture. Of course you will do so. But let me tell you that men who try to save life never can be paid! A man may pay for his coat, but he can never pay for the services which, by the blessing of God, redeem and sanctify his nature.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) All in the ministry, whatsoever their gifts be, are to be accepted; yea, though their gifts oftentimes be small and slender. True it is, they must all have some gifts to fit them to teach the people, but howsoever they be inferior to many others, yet for their office sake they must be regarded. I do not say, the people should depend upon them that are utterly ignorant and unlearned, but if meanly gifted in comparison of others, the people must not forsake them, neither wander from one Levite to another. Mark, therefore, that

ministers endued with a small, and yet a competent measure of gifts, may, notwithstanding, do unto God good service in the Church, and gain glory to His Name. He putteth His rich treasures in vessels, not of silver and gold, but of earth. Among the Apostles, it is to be thought that some had greater gifts than others; some were "the sons of thunder," and some "laboured more abundantly than others," no doubt according to the gifts they had received, yet all profitable to the Church. There is "a difference of gifts by the same Spirit," nevertheless all "given to profit withal" (1 Cor. xii. 4-7). And Paul saith, he spake with tongues more than others (1 Cor. xiv. 18). Experience teacheth this among ourselves, that many of mean gifts and little human learning, yet have been profitable teachers, and powerful instruments of much good in the Church of God, and gaining many to Him.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) As the great principle of love to Christ will not allow the more opulent to give scantily, so neither will it permit the poorest to come before Him empty. It was one of the Divine enactments even of the legal dispensation—*None shall come before Me empty.* But that which was matter of law with the Israelite, the Christian will seize as a golden opportunity for evincing his love to Christ; and will bring, though it be only a grain of incense for an offering, or a leaf for that wreath of

praise and honour which the Church delights to lay at the feet of Christ. Whatever Scripture example others may profess to copy, he will select the example of the benevolent widow; and, while others content themselves with only admiring it, he will often reflect on 'its imitableness. Nor will the language of the Apostle be ever heard by him but as an address to himself,—“Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” “These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to those that are with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Agreeably with these sentiments, the man who, at one time, imagined that his poverty quite exempted him from the obligations of charity, and only rendered him an *object* of it, is no sooner made the partaker of grace, than he feels himself impelled to place some offering on the altar of Christian benevolence; and, with the ready eye and hand of affection, he soon detects, for this end, some small superfluity which can be retrenched, or some leisure time which can be profitably employed. And when his mite-like offerings, the fruit of hard self-denial, or of the sweat of his brow, is presented, nothing could inflict on his grateful heart a deeper wound than to see that offering rejected on the ground of its comparative insignificance, or of his supposed inability to give it. It is the offering of a sinner's gratitude to a Saviour's love, and heaven rejoices over the oblation.—*John Harris, D.D.*

(d) It is observable that Abraham and Jacob, on particular occasions, voluntarily

devoted to God—what afterwards became a Divine law for the Jewish nation—a *tenth* of their property. Without implying that their example has any obligation on us, we may venture to say that *one tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion for charity, for those who, with so doing, are able to support themselves and families. For the more opulent, and especially for those who have no families, a larger proportion would be equally easy. For some, one half would be too little; while, for others, a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care. Indeed, of many among the poor it may be said, that if they give *anything* they give their *share*, they *cast in more* than all their brethren.

But in determining the proportion to be made sacred to God, the Christian would surely rather exceed than fall short of the exact amount. *With whom* is he stipulating? *For whom* is he preparing the offering? Well may the recollection put every covetous thought to instant flight tinging his cheek with shame at the bare possibility of ingratitude; and impelling him to lay his all at the feet of Christ. Only let him think of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved him, only let him pass by the cross on his way to the altar of oblation, and his richest offering will appear totally unworthy of Divine acceptance. When Christ is the object to be honoured, the affection of the pardoned penitent cannot stop to calculate the value of its alabaster box of precious ointment—that is an act to which a Judas only can stoop—its chief and sole regret is that the unction has not a richer perfume and a higher value.—*Ibid.*

## THE SUPREME CLAIMS OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

“All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them they shall offer unto the Lord.”

God claims that the first and the best of man's possessions shall be devoted unto Him.

I. Let us illustrate this claim.

1. *It applies to ourselves.* (1) He claims the best of our *persons*. He asks for our supreme love. “My son give Me thine heart.” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” &c. (2) He claims the best of our *life*. Youth, with its freshness and enthusiasm and hope, is His. “They that seek Me early, shall find Me.”

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Manhood, with its maturity and strength and firmness and wisdom, is His. He summons men to His service,—“Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.” He condescends by His Apostle to entreat men to comply with His demands. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies,” &c. He will not be satisfied with the dregs of life, or with the fragments of life; He demands its first, and best, and all.

2. *It applies to our possessions.* (1) Our *time* He claims: not the remnant, after the claims of business and pleasure have all been met. He will be served in

all. His demand must be met first, or it is slighted. (2) Our *treasures* also He claims. Man of wealth! God lays His hand upon thy property, and calls it His own. Man of genius! God calls thee to lay thine eloquence and logic, thy poetry and philosophy, upon His altar. Consecrate thy gifts to Him. Even the friend or relative who is more dear than life to us, He asserts His claim upon, and we are bound to submit. He demanded the first-born of Israel as peculiarly His; and He may claim that our first-born, or our Benjamin, shall be entirely surrendered to His service here, or He may call them away to serve Him in higher spheres. The choicest of our possessions and of ourselves; all that we have and all that we are, He asserts His right to.

## II. Let us enforce this claim.

We may do this on the following grounds:

1. *He has given to us whatever of good we possess.* "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." &c. "What hast thou that thou didst not

receive?" "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." He gives to us not absolutely, but as to stewards, &c. (a)

2. *He gave His Best to us.* How dear is His Son to Him! "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet He gave Him to us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. And He gave Him to humiliation and want, to suffering and sorrow, to shame and death. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Having given His Best so freely to us—and *such a Best!* He surely has an indisputable right to our best. (b)

3. *If we have complied with His great demand, and given ourselves to Him, we shall not hesitate to give Him the best of our possessions.* If we have given our hearts fully to Him, we shall not keep back anything which He requires of us. (c)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Think of the right which He has in all you possess. There is a sense in which no man can be said to possess an exclusive and irresponsible right in property, even in relation to his fellow-creatures. The land which he calls *his own*, is still guarded and watched over by a public law which would hold him responsible for its destruction. But if man thus claims a common interest in the most independent description of property, how much more does God hold a right in your possessions? He created them at first; and hence He has an original and supreme property in them. The world is His, and the fulness thereof. He continues them in existence every moment; and is thus every moment asserting afresh His original rights and establishing a new title to dominion over them. You have not brought into existence a single mite; all that you have done is to collect together what He had made ready to your hands. And whence did you derive the skill and ability to do this? "Thou must remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." Hence He cautions you against the sin of "saying in your heart, my power, and the might of mine own hand, hath gotten me this wealth," lest you should fall into the consequent sin of forgetting that He is still the supreme Proprietor of all you possess. And

hence too He solemnly reminds you that your enjoyments are His *gifts*, only in the sense that you had nothing wherewith to purchase them, and not in the sense that He has given away His right in them: that they are deposited with you as His steward, not alienated from Him and vested in you as their master; that both they and you are His to do with as seemeth good in His sight.

The moment you lose sight, therefore, of His absolute right to all you possess, you are embezzling your Lord's property, and realizing the character of the unjust steward. You are provoking God to resume His own, and to transfer it to more faithful hands. . . . Then hasten to His throne and acknowledge His right. Take all that you have into His presence, and dedicate it afresh to His service. Inscribe His blessed name on all your possessions.—*John Harris, D.D.*

(b) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "Herein is love!" The universe is crowded with proofs of His beneficence; but here is a proof which outweighs them all. How much He loved us we can never compute; we have no line with which to fathom, no standard with which to compare it, but He so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "Herein is love!" "Thanks



be unto God for His unspeakable gift." . . .

Nor is this all: He invites you to advance from the altar of sacrifice to the holiest of all within the veil;—in other words, He hath given you Christ that He may give you Himself. It was by wandering from Him that man first became selfish and unhappy. It was by losing Him that man was reduced to the necessity of looking for happiness in the creature. And, because no single kind of created good can satisfy the soul, man sought to accumulate all kinds, to monopolize every thing—he became selfish. But the blessed God, by offering to bring you back again to Himself, is offering to make you independent of all inferior things; to put you in possession of a good which shall enable you to look down with disdain on those things about which others are selfish; to lead you to an *infinite* good; a good, therefore, about which you need not be selfish, for were all the universe to share and enjoy it with you, it would still be an unexhausted infinite fulness of happiness.

Now let the most miserly individual come suddenly into the possession of great wealth, he would be conscious, at least for a short time, of kind and generous emotions. What then should be your emotions at discovering that, through Christ, you have found a God? And think, *what a God He is!* Enumerate His perfections; call up in your mind His exalted attributes; recollect some of the displays of His glory, the splendours of His throne, the amplitude of His dominions, the angelic orders of His kingdom, the richness of His gifts, the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for His people—and when your mind is filled, repeat to yourself the wondrous truth, "This God is my God for ever and ever." And, then, think what it is to have Him for *your God*: it is to have a real, participating, eternal interest in all that He is; to have Him for your "all in all"; to be "filled with all the fulness of God." Christian, are you aware of your wealth? have you yet awoken to a conscious possession of your infinite wealth? Do you not feel that you could give away the world itself as a trifle, while you stand and gaze at these infinite riches? All who have truly and fully returned to God have felt thus. They gazed on this glory and the world was eclipsed; they thought of it, and their heart became too large for earth; they reached after it, and the world fell from their hands, from their hearts. Having found the true source of happiness, they would fain have had all mankind to come and share it with them. And when He commanded them

to call the world to come to Him and be happy, they gave away everything, even life itself, in the noble employ, and from love to His name.—*Ibid.*

(c) It is related in Roman history, that when the people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ, though not so detailed and specific as this formula, is equally comprehensive. And do you not account these your best moments when you feel constrained to lament that your surrender comprehends no more? Can you recall to mind the way in which He has redeemed you, the misery from which He has snatched you, and the blessedness to which He is conducting you, without feeling that He has bought you a thousand times over? that you are His by the tenderest, weightiest obligations? And when you feel thus, how utterly impossible would it be for you at such a moment to stipulate for an exception in favour of your property!—to harbour a mental reservation in favour of *that*!

Can you think of the blessedness attending the act itself of dedication to God,—that you are wedding yourself to infinite riches, uniting yourself to infinite beauty, allying yourself to infinite excellence; giving yourself to God, and receiving God in return, so that henceforth all His infinite resources, His providence, His Son, His Spirit, His heaven, He Himself, all become yours, to the utmost degree in which you can enjoy them,—can you think of this without often repeating the act? without feeling that had you all the excellencies of a myriad of angels, His love would deserve the eternal devotion of the whole? Realize to your own mind the nature of Christian dedication, and the claims of Him who calls for it, and so far from giving penuriously to His cause, you will take every increase of your substance into His presence and devote it to His praise; you will regard every appeal which is made to your Christian benevolence as an appeal to that solemn treaty which made you His, and you will honour it accordingly; you will deeply feel the penury of all riches as an expression of your love to Him; Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, or the beasts thereof an offering large enough to satisfy the cravings of your love.—*Ibid.*

### THE SUPREME PORTION OF MAN.

(Verse 20.)

"The Lord spake unto Aaron; . . .  
I am thy part and thine inheritance  
among the children of Israel."

"The possession of the priests and Levites did not consist in the revenues assigned to them by God, but in the

possession of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the same sense in which the tribe of Levi was the peculiar possession of Jehovah out of the whole of the people of possession, was Jehovah also the peculiar possession of Levi ; and just as the other tribes were to live upon what was afforded by the land assigned them as a possession, Levi was to live upon what Jehovah bestowed upon it. And inasmuch as not only the whole land of the twelve tribes, with which Jehovah had enfeoffed them, but the whole earth belonged to Jehovah (Exod. xix. 5), He was necessarily to be regarded as the greatest possession of all, beyond which nothing greater is conceivable, and in comparison with which every other possession is to be regarded as nothing. Hence it was evidently the greatest privilege and highest honour to have Him for a portion and possession (*Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. p. 44). "For truly," as *Masius* writes (Com. on Josh.) "he who possesses God possesses all things ; and the worship (*cultus*) of Him is infinitely fuller of delight, and far more productive, than the cultivation (*cultus*) of any soil."—*Keil and Del.*

God is revealed in His Word as the portion of all godly souls (see *Psa.* xvi. 5 ; *lxxiii.* 26 ; *cxix.* 57 ; *Lam.* iii. 24). This is the pre-eminent portion ; no inheritance can be compared with this.

### I. This portion is all-sufficient.

God is the portion of His people inasmuch as they possess His *mind* ; He has revealed to them His thoughts and will concerning them. They possess His *heart* ; He is profoundly and affectionately interested in their welfare ; He loves them with an infinite love. Our position is that having Him they have all-sufficiency,—they have—

1. *His wisdom for their direction.* "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with Mine eye."

2. *His power for their protection.* "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress," &c. (*Psa.* xci. 2-13). "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," &c. (*Psa.* cxxi. 3-8).

3. *His providence for their supply.* "No good will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Bread shall be given him ; his waters shall be sure." "My God shall supply all your need," &c.

4. *His grace for their spiritual support.* "My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," &c. (2 *Cor.* ix. 8).

5. *His Heaven for their home.* "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. (*John* xiv. 2, 3). He has begotten them "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," &c. (1 *Pet.* iii. 5). "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them," &c. (*Rev.* xxi. 3, 4).

Well did Savonarola enquire, "What must not he possess who possesses the Possessor of all ?" (*a*)

### II. This portion is joy-inspiring.

In the realization of the presence and love of God there is the highest, holiest joy. "In Thy presence there is fulness of joy," &c. The perfection of the blessedness of heaven is in the full manifestation of His gracious presence. Possessing Him,—

1. The joy of *satisfied affections* is ours. "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The heart loves God, and rejoices in being loved by Him who is infinitely true and beautiful and good, who changeth not, and who abideth for ever.

2. The joy of *sweet and sanctified fellowship* is ours. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The influence of this fellowship was well expressed by the two disciples at Emmaus,—“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us ?” &c.

3. The joy of *true progress* is ours. Under the influence of His blessed presence all the capacities and faculties of our being are quickened into holy activity, and sustained in continuous progress. Realizing His presence and fellowship our being grows into likeness

to Him; and such growth is unspeakably joyous. Thus the conscious possession of God as our "part and inheritance" is the highest blessedness. (b)

"O this is life, and peace, and joy,  
My God, to find Thee so—  
Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear  
And all Thy love to know."—*Buhier*.

### III. This portion is inalienable.

Where shall we find a secure and lasting inheritance. Not in this world; not in anything material, or temporal. *Riches* are not inalienable; they "certainly make themselves wings; they fly away," &c. "Trust not in uncertain riches." *Pleasures* are not inalienable. The pleasures of this world can only be enjoyed for a season, and that a brief one. *Honours* are of very uncertain tenure; the hero of one day is frequently execrated the next. *Friends* are not abiding; sometimes they are lost to us

by unfaithfulness; sometimes they are removed from us by death. Our *bodily health* is precarious. Even our *mental sanity and strength* we cannot claim as unchangeably, and for ever ours. There is but one immutable and inalienable "part and inheritance," that is God. He changes not; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He abideth for ever; He loveth for ever. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Even death cannot deprive us of this inheritance. "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Death rather makes our inheritance more fully and perfectly ours; it introduces us to a more complete and constant realization of His presence. After death "we shall see Him as He is." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

Is this "part and inheritance" ours?

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We have a right, each of us—if we are in Christ—we have a right to expect this sufficiency, because it is promised in the Bible. We gather it from the declarations of Scripture. Listen to them, they are yours. "Thus saith the Lord who created thee, O Jacob, who formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name." What a beautiful thought that is! Just get the meaning and beauty out of it. How many thousands of believers, thousands upon thousands of believers, have there been in the world from the beginning of its history until now—thousands in the patriarchal ages who looked through the glass, and who saw, dimly, the streak of the morning in the distance, and, even with that streak of light, were glad—thousands, in the prophetic times, who discerned it in the brightness of a nearer vision—thousands who looked in its full-orbed lustre, when Christ came into the world—thousands upon thousands, since that time, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—thousands who are now upon the earth, working out their salvation with fear and trembling—thousands upon thousands that shall come into the Church in the time of its millennial glory, when the gates of it shall not be shut day nor night, because the porter shall have no chance of shutting them, the people crowd in so fast. Now, get all that mass of believers, past, present, and future, a company that no man can number;

and to each of them God comes in this promise, and says, "I have called thee by thy name, I know all about thee,"—that is, I have not a merely vague, indefinite knowledge of thee; as an individual believer I know thy name, I could single thee out of millions, I could tell the world all thy solitudes, and all thy apprehensions, and all thy hopes, and all thy sorrows—"I have called thee by thy name." Oh, precious promise! Take it to your hearts. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers"—deeper than the waters—"they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee."—Listen again. "The Lord God is a sun and shield"—light and protection; that nearly embraces all our wants—"He will give grace and glory." Is there anything left out? And if there are any of you so perversely clever and so mischievously ingenious in multiplying arguments in favour of your own despair, that you can conceive of some rare and precious blessing that is not wrapped up either in grace or glory—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God," "Cast all thy care." "Nay," the rebel heart says, "there is some little of it I must bear myself; something that has reference to the heart's bitterness, that it alone knoweth;



orto the heart's deep, dark sorrow, with which no stranger intermeddles—that I must bear myself." "Cast *all* thy care upon Me, for I care for thee." What! distrustful still? Can you not take God at His word? Hark! He condescends to expostulate with you upon your unbelief: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and spakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord"—how often have you said that in the time of your sorrow! you know you have—"My way is hid from the Lord, my judgment is passed over from my God. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint." He does not merely take his swoon away and leave him weakly; He makes him strong. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength". . . . Brethren, are you in Christ? Then all that belongs to the covenant is yours. Yours is the present heritage, yours is the future recompense of reward.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(b) Haws, that are for hogs, grow upon every hedge; but roses, that are for men, only grow in pleasant gardens. Though many have counterfeit jewels, yet there are but a few that have the true diamond; though many have their earthly portions, yet there are but a few that have God for their portion. . . . Why have the saints in heaven more joy and delight than the saints on earth, but because they have a clearer and a fuller knowledge of their interest and propriety in God than the others have? The knowledge of a man's propriety in God is the comfort of comforts. Propriety makes every comfort a pleasurable comfort, a delightful comfort. When a man walks in a fair meadow, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a pleasant garden, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a fruitful corn-field, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a stately habitation, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a rich mine, and can write *mine* upon it; oh! how doth it please him? how doth it

deight him? how doth it joy and rejoice him? Of all words, this word *meum* is the sweetest and the comfortablest. Ah! when a man can look upon God and write *meum*; when he can look upon God, and say, "This God is my portion;" when he can look upon God, and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28), how will all the springs of joy rise in his soul! Oh, who can but joy to be owner of that God who fills heaven and earth with His fulness? who can but rejoice to have Him for his portion, in having Whom he hath all things, in having Whom he can want nothing? The serious thoughts of our propriety in God will add much sweet to all our sweets; yea, it will make every bitter sweet."—*Brooks.*

(c) None of your dearest and most cherished loves are at all worthy to sit upon the throne of your heart—far down in the scale must they be placed, when the God who gave them to you is brought into comparison. That broad bosom of your beloved husband beats fondly and faithfully, but when death lays it low, as ere long it must, how wretched will be your condition if you have not an everlasting Comforter upon whose breast to lean! Those dear little sparkling eyes, which are like stars in the heaven of your social joy, if these be the gods of your idolatry, how wretched will you be when their brightness is dim, and the mother's joy is mouldering back to dust! Happy is he who hath an everlasting joy and an undying comfort; and there is none in this respect like unto the God of Jeshurun. There would be fewer broken hearts if hearts were more completely the Lord's. We should have no rebellious spirits if, when we had our joys, we used them lawfully, and did not too much build our hopes upon them. All beneath the moon will wane. Everything on these shores ebbs and flows like the sea. Everything beneath the sun will be eclipsed. You will not find in time that which is only to be discovered in eternity, namely an immutable and unfailing source of comfort.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

"Ordinances respecting purification from the uncleanness of death."

The association of death with sin (Gen. ii. 17) sufficiently explains the ideas on which these ordinances are based. The principle that death and all pertaining to it, as being the manifestation and result of sin, are defiling, and so lead to interruption of the living relationship between God and

His people, is not now introduced for the first time, nor is it at all peculiar to the Mosaic law. It was, on the contrary, traditional amongst the Israelites from the earliest times, is assumed in various enactments made already (cf. v. 2; ix. 6, sqq.; Lev. x. 1, 7; xi. 8, 11, 24; xxi. 1, sqq.), and is traceable in various forms amongst many nations of antiquity. . . .

The rites of purifying prescribed amongst these various nations have points of similarity to those laid down in this chapter; and indeed sprinklings and washings would naturally form a part in them all (cf. ch. viii. 7). Moses then adopted here, as elsewhere, existing and ancient customs, with significant additions, as helps in the spiritual education of his people.

The ordinance was probably given at this time because the plague, which happened (xvi. 46-50) about the matter of Korah, had spread the defilement of death so widely through the camp as to seem to require some special measures of purification, more particularly as the deaths through it were in an extraordinary manner the penalty of sin. Occasion is accordingly taken to introduce a new ordinance on the whole subject, which might serve to re-assure the affrighted people at the time, supply a ready means of relief from this sort of uncleanness for the future, and by the typical character of its new elements, provide a vehicle for important instruction as to a more real Atonement afterwards to be revealed."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 2. *The ordinance of the law.* Keil and Del.: "A 'statute of instruction,' or law-statute. This combination of the two words commonly used for law and statute, which is only met with again in chap. xxxi. 21, and there, as here, in connection with a rule relating to purification from the uncleanness of death, is probably intended to give emphasis to the design of the law about to be given, to point it out as one of great importance."

*Red heifer* "פָּרָה" is not a cow generally, but a young cow, a heifer; δάμαλις (lxx.), *juvenca*, between the calf and the full-grown cow. . . . The sacrificial animal was not to be a bullock, as in the case of the ordinary sin-offering of the congregation (Lev. iv. 14), but a female, because the female sex is the bearer of life (Gen. iii. 20), a פָּרָה, i.e., *lit.*, the fruit-bringing; and of a red colour, not because the blood-red colour points to

sin, but as the colour of the most 'intensive life,' which has its seat in the blood, and shows itself in the red colour of the face (the cheeks and lips); and one 'upon which no yoke had ever come,' i.e., whose vital energy had not yet been crippled by labour under the yoke. Lastly, like all the sacrificial animals, it was to be uninjured and free from faults, inasmuch as the idea of representation, which lay at the foundation of all the sacrifices, but more especially of the sin-offerings, demanded natural sinlessness and original purity, quite as much as imputed sin and transferred uncleanness. Whilst the last-mentioned prerequisite showed that the victim was well fitted for bearing sin, the other attributes indicated the fullness of life and power in their highest forms, and qualified it to form a powerful antidote to death. As thus appointed to furnish a re-agent against death and mortal corruption, the sacrificial animal was to possess throughout, viz., in colour, in sex, and in the character of its body, the fullness of life in its greatest freshness and vigour."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Unto Eleazar.* Not unto Aaron, the high priest, because the ordinance was closely connected with death and the uncleanness arising therefrom, and such uncleanness the high priest was commanded to avoid (Lev. xxi. 11).

*Without the camp,* because the defilement was regarded as transferred to the sacrificial animal.

*Slay her.* It was not the business of the priest to slay her, but she was to be slain "before his face."

Verse 4. *Sprinkle of her blood directly, &c.* The priest was to sprinkle the blood in the direction of the front of the tabernacle.

*Seven times.* Seven indicating perfection. Comp. Lev. iv. 6, 17.

Verse 5. *Burn the heifer, &c.* "The defilement, being external, extended to the whole body of the animal: hence the propriety of burning the victim entire and everything connected with it."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 6. *Cedar-wood and hyssop, &c.* "In this sacrifice, the blood, which was generally poured out at the foot of the altar, was burned along with the rest, and the ashes to be obtained were impregnated with the substance thereof. But in order still further to increase the strength of these ashes, which were already well fitted to serve as a powerful antidote to the corruption of death, as being the incorruptible residuum of the sin-offering which had not been destroyed by the fire, cedar-wood was thrown into the fire, as the symbol of the incorruptible continuance of life; and hyssop, as the symbol of purification from the corruption of death; and scarlet-wool, the deep red of which shadowed forth the strongest vital energy—(see Lev. xiv. 6)—so that the ashes might be regarded as the quintessence of all that purified and strengthened life, refined and sublimated by the fire." (*Leyrer.*)—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 7-10. All who had to do with the heifer or her ashes became unclean until the evening, because of the defilement of sin and death which had been transferred to her. Comp. Lev. xvi. 21, 22, 26.

Verse 11. *Unclean seven days.* "How low does this lay man! He who touched a dead *beast* was only unclean for *one day* (Lev. xi. 24, 27, 39); but he who touches a dead *man* is unclean for *seven days*. This was certainly designed to mark the peculiar impurity of man,

and to show his sinfulness—seven times worse than the vilest animal! O thou son of the morning, how art thou fallen!"—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 17. *Running water shall be put, &c.* Heb. as in margin: "Living waters shall be given." "The waters of wells and fountains are called living waters, and are very much esteemed" (Lev. xiv. 5, 50; Num. xix. 17).—*John Jahn, D.D.*

Verse 19. *On the third day and on the seventh day.* The double purification indicates the depth of the defilement which was to be removed.

Verse 20. *That soul shall be cut off, &c.* This is repeated here from verse 13, to render the warning more impressive. Some interpret the phrase as meaning cut off, by death; others, cut off by exclusion from the political and religious privileges of the nation. "In Exodus xxxi. 14, 15, death is prescribed as the manner of cutting off from among the people the Sabbath-breaker; see also xxxv. 2. In Lev. xvii. 4, cutting off from among the people is the penalty of killing a clean beast and not bringing it as an offering; but in xxiv. 17, 'He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.' (See also Exod. xxi. 12; Num. xxxv. 31.) In Lev. xviii. 29, cutting off is the punishment for unnatural crime; in Exod. xxii. 19, death. So that it would appear as if cutting off generally, but not always, implied death at man's hand."—*H. Alford, D.D.,* on Genesis xvii. 14.

# THE ORDINANCE OF THE RED HEIFER; A PARABLE OF THE POLLUTION OF SIN AND THE DIVINE METHOD OF CLEANSING THEREFROM.

(Whole Chapter.)

Let us consider—

I. The defiling nature of sin.

On this point the chapter suggests—

1. *Sin is defiling in its nature.* A dead body and everything pertaining thereto are represented as polluting those who came near to them. Death, and the corruption arising from it, are set forth as a Parable of sin and its influence. Most of the deaths which occurred in the

wilderness were literally the punishment of sin. Thousands died by the plague on account of their rebellion (chap. xvi. 49). The whole of one generation, with very few exceptions, was doomed to die in the desert because of unbelief (chap. xiv. 28-30). Thus death would speak to them of the sin which caused it. Sin is a polluting thing. It defiles the soul even in its purest affections; it corrupts



its principles ; it poisons its motives, &c. No one can have anything to do with sin without incurring contamination.

2. *The defiling power of sin is of great virulence.* "The extreme virulence of the uncleanness is taught by the regulations that the victim should be wholly consumed outside the camp, whereas generally certain parts were consumed on the altar, and the offal only outside the camp (comp. Lev. iv. 11, 12) ; that the blood was sprinkled *towards* and not *before* the sanctuary ; that the officiating minister should be neither the high priest, nor yet simply a priest, but the *presumptive* high priest, the office being too impure for the first, and too important for the second ; that even the priest and the person that burnt the heifer were rendered unclean by reason of their contact with the victim ; and, lastly, that the purification should be effected, not simply by the use of water, but of water mixed with ashes, which served as a lye, and would therefore have peculiarly cleansing properties." The virulence of the uncleanness is also manifest in the ways in which it was incurred. If a person entered a tent, wherein anyone had died, before it was purified (ver. 14), or touched the bone of a dead man, or a grave (ver. 16), he became unclean ; and if he, before his purification, touched anyone, the person so touched also became unclean (ver. 22). We have in this a striking parable of the virulence of the contagion of sin. Association with sinners is perilous. Man's safety is in loathing sin and shunning it in all its forms. (a).

3. *The defiling power of sin is wide-spread.* Death was present in the tent, and in the open field. The Israelite that would avoid its contamination had need to exercise constant watchfulness. Sin surrounds us. In this world the moral atmosphere is infected with it. The danger of contamination is great and constant. In our amusements, in literature, in society, in business, in politics, in every department of life, sin is present and active.

## II. The necessity of cleansing from sin.

The legislation of this chapter was based upon that necessity. If any person failed to cleanse himself from the pollution of death, he was "cut off from among the congregation," he was excluded from the society, and deprived of the privileges of his nation. If sin be not cleansed from the soul, it will prove its ruin. The presence and blessing of God are indispensable to our spiritual well being. But sin separates the soul from God (comp. Isa. lix. 2 ; Col. i. 21), and so cuts it off from the great Source of life and light. Sin excludes from the fellowship of the people of God. Generally and as a rule it does so in this world ; the Church of Christ should be pure, and striving for perfect purity. Sin invariably and infallibly excludes from Heaven (Rev. xxi. 27). We must get rid of sin or be utterly undone.

## III. The provision for cleansing from sin.

Regarding this as illustrated by the arrangements for cleansing those who were defiled by death, we notice—

1. *It is Divine in its origin.* God instituted this cleansing ordinance of the Red Heifer ; "the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance," &c. The provision for spiritual cleansing is of God. The idea of getting rid of sin came from Him. The sacrifice by which it is put away He bestowed. The agencies which are used in the work He instituted. He gave His Son, His Spirit, Gospel ministries, &c. Human salvation is of Divine origin.

2. *It involves the sacrifice of the most perfect life.* The directions concerning the sacrificial victim, given in verse 2, as to its sex, its colour, and its non-acquaintance with the yoke, all point to intensity and fulness of life and power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 2). Further, it was to be perfect : "wherein is no blemish." Moreover the "cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet," which were burnt with the heifer, indicated strength and continuance of life, and

purifying power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 6). All this clearly points to the perfect sacrifice of the perfect life of Jesus Christ. His was the pre-eminent life. "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." His was the perfect life. "He offered Himself without spot to God." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (b). By His self-sacrifice, which exhibits the most perfect obedience and utter devotion to the will of God, and the fullest, sublimest expression of the love of God, Christ cleanseth the souls of men from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is the all-sufficient and the only true provision for purifying the soul of man from moral defilement. (c)

3. *It is invariab! in its efficacy.* "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean" (verse 12). "And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," &c. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through

the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Who shall say "how much more"? The blood of Christ cleanseth completely from all sin all who seek Him in faith.

IV. The application of the provision for cleansing from sin.

The Israelite who was defiled by the dead must purify himself with the "water of separation." "A clean person must take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," in order that he may be purified. If this were not done, the existence of the provision for cleansing, so far from profiting him, would rather be the occasion of condemnation; he refuses the means of cleansing provided for him, and he "shall be cut off from among the congregation" (verse 20). And if Christ be not received by faith He will profit us nothing. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." If we believe not on Him, we shall not only not be cleansed and saved from sin, but shall be condemned for unbelief (comp. John iii. 18. 36). On Him let us believe; for He alone can cleanse and save us. (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The impious lives of the wicked are as contagious as the most fearful plague that infects the air. When the doves of Christ lie among such pots, their yellow feathers are sullied. You may observe that in the oven the fine bread frequently hangs upon the coarse; but the coarse very seldom adheres to the fine. If you mix an equal portion of sour vinegar and sweet wine together, you will find that the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine sweeten the vinegar. That is a sound body that continues healthy in a pest-house. It is a far greater wonder to see a saint maintain his purity among sinners, than it is to behold a sinner becoming pure among saints. Christians are not always like fish, which retain their freshness in a salt sea; or like the rose, which preserves its sweetness among the most noisome weeds; or like the fire, which burns the hottest when the season is coldest. A good man was once heard to lament, "that as often as he went into the company of the wicked, he returned less a man

from them than he was before he joined with them." The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like persons who are much exposed to the sun, insensibly tanned.—*William Secker.*

(b) When you contemplate the Saviour, you find all the virtues enshrined in Him; other men are stars, but He is a constellation, nay, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of splendour; other men are gems and jewels, but He is the crown imperial where every jewel glitters; other men furnish but a part of the picture, and the background is left, or else there is something in the foreground that is but roughly touched, but He furnishes the whole; not the minutest portion is neglected; the character is perfect and matchless. If I look at Peter, I admire his courage; if I look at Paul, I wonder at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God; if I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing; but when I look to the Saviour, I am not so much attracted by

any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense; the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For an illustration on the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, see p. 141.

(c) It is not because God is indifferent to moral qualities that He loves sinners. His love is medicinal. His life is a world-nursing life. He cleanses whom He loves, that He may love yet more. God's nature is infinitely healing and cleansing. They that are brought in contact with the Divine heart feel it by the growth that instantly begins in them. And His being is so capacious that all the wants of all sinful creatures, through endless ages, neither exhaust nor weary Him. Ten thousand armies might bathe in the ocean, and neither sully its purity, nor exhaust its cleansing power. But the ocean is but a cup by the side of God's heart. Realms and orbs may bathe and rise into purity; no words will ever hint or dimly paint the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. It is love that pours, endless and spontaneous, just as sunlight does—simply because God is love. By the side of Christ, a mother's love—that on earth shines high above all other, as a star above night candles—is in comparison like those glimmering, expiring stars when the sun shines them into radiant eclipse. In the bosom of such a God there is salvation for every one that will trust Him. And what chances of safety or purity are there for

those who reject Him; who light their own candle, and walk in its pale glimmer, rather than in the noonday glory of God in Christ? —*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin, and he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed; but when he takes it out again, if his eye be clear, he says, "Alas! it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better; I must add a more pungent salt, I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart." He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time as he takes it out his own eyes become more keen, and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before. Then goeth he and taketh unto himself nitre and much soap, but when he has used it all, when he has gone to his church, when he has gone to his chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done I know not what to prove the genuineness of his repentance, ah! the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be, let him do what he may. Yet what your repentings cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, sinner, and that in one single day.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For illustrations on the appropriation of the provision see pp. 142, 190.

### THE LAW OF THE RED HEIFER APPLIED.

#### (Whole Chapter.)

The symbols of the Jewish worship were instituted at special times. God did not put it forth as a system. It is like a house to which have been added rooms and offices and hall as the growth of the family has demanded more scope in which to maintain new and higher thoughts. One of such additions is found in the ordinance promulgated in this chapter. It had its origin in the wish to assuage the vivid fears of the people that they were not able to go near to the tabernacle and live. They had seen a terrible punishment overtake the men who had attempted to interfere with the positions held by Moses and Aaron: they had been awed when a sudden destruction was smiting down thousands in the camp: and they had been made conscious that their sins

rendered them utterly unfitted to be near the Holy One of Israel. But mercy has exhaustless remedies for human defilement. Aaron and the Levites are appointed to bear the sins of the holy things; a red unspotted heifer is commanded to be slain and burned, and its ashes to be used as a means of purifying the flesh from the uncleanness which hindered approach to the Lord of glory. Thus the new symbol is instituted when the people have become conscious that social impurity, impurity shared through and with others, as well as personal transgression, dooms to death. Wider views of what they need towards God cause Him to send out the beams of a light which is to dispel every doubt and fear.

In what ways did this ceremony lead



into such confidence? What were the letters by which the people could spell out God's thoughts of peace?

The chief lessons taught by the ordinance of the Red Heifer seem to be embraced in four propositions:—

### I. Liability for social evil.

"All the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron" (chap. xvi. 41, sqq.). Might not the survivors reason thus: "If those who have died did wrong we have been equally wrong; if we are not erased from the roll of the living, there is, notwithstanding, an evil chargeable to us; partakers in a like offence we are worthy of a like condemnation; the evil has not exhausted itself on them, and we are liable in some form for their calamities; we cannot in this state of pollution go into the presence of God—is there not needed a purification for those social ills whose last and most affecting sign is death?" A very similar feeling of liability might be impressed on the men of our own generation. There are houses in narrow streets, badly ventilated, and steaming with the odours of dirt-heaps and cess-pools. Warnings have been given, that such a position is laid open to dangerous attacks on health and life; but the warnings are trifled with or disbelieved. Then comes the "noisome pestilence." Young and old, strong and feeble, degraded and decent, are swept into the abyss of the dead. . . . Viewing those painful scenes, could just men, who had neglected to do as was advised, escape from self-censure and condemnation?

### II. The ignominy of death.

The presence of, or contact with, the signs of the death of mankind, separated from communion with God in His sanctuary. Consciously or unconsciously no one could always avoid these. The human body becomes a loathsome thing by the stroke of death, and we are fain to bury it out of our sight. There is reason for believing that death is the openest sign of ignominy in our nature. . . . Only without us and above us, in the death of Christ Jesus, and in His rising from the dead, is that which

shows, along with the fearfulness of sin, the means of its removal.

### III. Freedom from the consequences of sin is by application of a prepared remedy.

The several parts in the process of preparing the water of cleansing bear emblems to show what God requires for freeing from sin. The slaying of the Heifer, and the sprinkling of its blood, laid bare the foundation principles that "it is the blood which maketh atonement for the soul," that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." . . . . Uncleaness incurred from the dead prevents approach to the holy Lord God. Separated from His presence on earth is a forecasting of an eternal separation—"that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (verse 13). But He has a remedy for this too. He provides means of purification, and thus of renewed access to Himself. Not only is the blood of bulls and goats shed, but the ashes of a heifer is also to "sprinkle the unclean, in order to sanctify to the purifying of the flesh," and render fit for all the privileges of acceptable worship. "He shall purify himself," &c. (verse 12). It is not enough that there are ashes, and water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop at hand; the persons needing the removal of the dangerous uncleaness must get those materials applied in the prescribed manner.

The remedy was not dependent for its efficacy upon its earthly aspects. Human hands made it ready and conveyed it to the recipients; but the sole power to take away the defilement lay in that of God which was in it. It signified to the people that there was another sphere than that in which they moved, and in which they were rendered unworthy to dwell in the Lord's presence; that they must *stand by faith* amid the workings of God. Did the eyes of any amongst them catch a glimpse of another manifestation of the love of God, in which ONE should be made righteousness and sanctification as well as redemption—a coming sacrifice whose blood should be shed, not only to be a "propitiation for sins," but also to

be "sprinkled on the conscience to purge it from dead works to serve the living God?" . . . Jesus has died, &c. The ransom price for our lives has not to be paid—it is paid, &c. "The gift of God is eternal life," &c.

IV. To be without fitness for standing before God acceptably is inexcusable and irretrievable.

Once purified did not do away with the necessity of being purified again when another defilement had been incurred. The new impurity must be removed by a new application, and the cleansing remedy was constantly available (verses 9, 10).

What could justify neglect of this remedy?—*D. G. Watt, M.A.*

### THE RED HEIFER AN ANALOGUE OF THE CHRIST.

(Verses 1-10.)

Much has been written on the Red Heifer as a type of Christ which appears to us to be frivolous, and in no sense worthy of regard as an exposition of this portion of Scripture, because of the absence of Scriptural evidence that such things were intended in the ordinance. But we are warranted in looking for an analogy between the Red Heifer and the Christ by the comparison between them instituted in Heb. ix. 13, 14. It appears to us that the Red Heifer is an analogue of the Christ—

#### I. In its characteristics.

These may be classified thus:

1. *Fulness of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, upon which never came yoke" "The sex of the victim (female, and hence life-giving); its red colour (the colour of blood, the seat of life); its unimpaired vigour (never having borne the yoke); its youth; all these symbolised life in its fulness and freshness as the antidote of death." What Divine fulness of life there was in Jesus Christ! "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "I am He that liveth," or "the living One." He is the great antagonist of death and giver of life. See Acts ii. 24; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xv. 22; John x. 10; Col. iii. 3, 4.

2. *Perfection of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish." "Christ offered Himself without spot to God." He was "the Holy One and the Just;" "tempted in all points like as

we are, yet without sin;" "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" "Christ . . . a lamb without blemish and without spot." (a)

II. In the treatment to which it was subjected.

1. *The heifer was sacrificed.* "One shall slay her before" the face of the priest. She was regarded as bearing the uncleanness of the people, and was slain

as "a sin-offering" (חַטָּאת, A. V., "a purification for sin," verses 9, 17) for the people. Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (comp. Isa. liii. 5-9; John vi. 51; Rom. v. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Thess. v. 10; Heb. x. 10). (b)

2. *The heifer was sacrificed "without the camp."* It was taken outside the camp because it was regarded as bearing the uncleanness for which it was to be sacrificed. Our Lord was crucified "without the gate" of Jerusalem, between two thieves, as if He were the vilest of men (comp. John xix. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 11, 12).

3. *The heifer was completely consumed.* "One shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn." The sacrifice of Christ was unreserved. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He offered Himself wholly, body, soul, and spirit, to God, for the redemption of man from sin.

III. In the purpose for which it was designed.

1. *The red heifer was intended to*

*cleanse from ceremonial defilement.* The ashes of the heifer were to be put in spring water; this water was to be sprinkled upon the unclean for their purification (comp. Heb. ix. 13, 14). Christ "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

2. *The ashes of the heifer were efficacious for this purpose* (verses 12, 19). The efficacy was not in the ashes themselves, but in the appointment of God, and the faith and obedience of His people. "How much more shall the blood of Christ?" &c. He can cleanse from sins of deepest dye, and make the soul radiant in purity (comp. 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5; vii. 14; Eph. v. 26, 27). (c)

3. *The ashes of the heifer were amply sufficient for this purpose.*

(1) As to number. They were intended for all the congregation of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them (ver. 10), and were enough for all. Christ "died for all," and His salvation is sufficient for all, free for all, offered to all (1 John ii. 2).

(2) As to time. The Jews say that the ashes of this heifer served till the

captivity, or nearly a thousand years. This statement is very questionable; but they would certainly last for a long time, as it was necessary to use very little at a time. Moreover, ashes are very incorruptible; so they symbolise the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till the whole ransomed Church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."—*Cowper.* (d)

4. *The ashes of the heifer had to be personally applied to be efficacious.* The unclean person must be sprinkled with "the water of separation" on the third day and on the seventh day for his cleansing. Without this, the cleansing element was of no avail to him. So Christ must be accepted by faith, or His sacrificial life and death will profit us nothing.

Conclusion.

We are all defiled by sin: let us seek by faith to be cleansed by "the precious blood of Christ."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In Jesus Christ there was no sin. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His humanity was without stain or flaw, pure and perfect as on the day when "God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good." In Him there were no rebellious insurgences of appetite and passion, no disorderly conflict between the lower nature and the higher, but the flesh was in absolute subjection to the spirit, and His whole mind and heart in entire and strictest harmony with the mind and heart of God. So that there He stood, the very "beauty of holiness," the living human image of God; the perfect embodiment of the Divine ideal of humanity; of all mankind the only genuine Man. The Man on whom all eyes and hearts were to rest and fasten.—*J. H. Smith, M.A.*

(b) As the Son of Man, he took our place under the law, and stood representatively in our stead, that He might satisfy the law in our behalf; that he might render it perfect obedience, and offer Himself a public substitutionary victim to its offended majesty, redeeming us from its curse by "being made a curse for us." He thus "suffered for us," "the just for the unjust," suffered for us, not

merely beneficially, as a nursing-mother may suffer for her child, or a soldier for his country's good, but *substitutionally and penalty*, in our place and stead. His person was substituted for our persons, His sufferings for our sufferings. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." He, the sinless, consented to be treated as a sinner, that we sinners might be treated as sinless. In this great, this public capacity, then, He, the Man, officially suffered, and officially died. There on the cross He hung, spotlessly pure and perfect, agonising under the imputation of the world's guilt, the sinless substitute for man's sinful race, the substitutionary Man, the representative sinner! There He hung, a voluntary victim to the violated majesty of the law, and in Him mankind representatively died. "For we thus judge," says St. Paul, "that if one died for all, then all died."—*Ibid.*

(c) "We have some little difficulty," said a scientific lecturer, "with the iron dyes; but the most troublesome of all are Turkey red dyes. You see I have dipped this into my



solution, its red is paler, but it is still strong. If I steep it long enough to efface the colour entirely, the fibre will be destroyed; it will be useless for our manufacture. How, then, are we to dispose of our red rags? We leave their indelible dye as it is, and make them into blotting paper. Perhaps you wonder why your writing-pad is red. Now you know the reason."

What a striking illustration of the power of "the precious blood of Christ" to change and cleanse is furnished by the above explanation. The Spirit of God led the prophet Isaiah to write, not "though your sins be as blue as the sky, or as green as the olive leaf, or as black as night." He chose the very colour which modern science, with all its appliances, finds to be indestructible. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—*Sunday Teacher's Treasury*.

(d) I have found it an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think, that although it has been flowing on for six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want. And when I have watched the rise of the sun as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or, in a sky draped with golden curtains, sprang up from his ocean-bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and planted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvest of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliantly as ever; his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his natural floods of light less full, for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these but images of the fulness that is in Christ? Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing! For when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness, or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fulness of Christ shall flow on throughout eternity, in

the bliss of the redeemed.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Have we outlived the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and is the tale of His Cross a sound from which all the music has gone for ever? We need the sun to-day as we have ever needed it; the wind is still the breath of health to our dying bodies; still we find in the earth the bread without which we cannot live; these are our friends of whom we never tire; can it be that the only thing of which we are weary is God's answer to our souls' deepest need? Shall we keep everything but the blood of Christ? Shall the Cross go, and the sun be left? Verily as the sun withdrew at sight of that Cross and for the moment fled away, he would shine never more were that sacred tree hewn down by furious man. The blood of Christ, it is the fountain of immortality! The blood of Christ, it makes the soul's summer warm and beauteous! The blood of Christ, it binds all heaven, with its many mansions and throngs without number, in holy and indissoluble security! My soul, seek no other stream in which to drown thy leprosy! My lips, seek no other song with which to charge your music! My hands, seek no other task with which to prove your energy! I would be swallowed up in Christ. I would be nailed to His Cross. I would be baptized with His baptism. I would quail under the agony of His pain that I might triumph with Him in the glory of His resurrection. O my Jesus! My Saviour! Thine heart did burst for me, and all its sacred blood flowed for the cleansing of my sin. I need it all I need it every day. I need it more and more. O search out the inmost recesses of my poor wild heart, and let Thy blood remove every stain of evil.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream

Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die."

Mighty Saviour! repeat all Thy miracles by taking away the guilt and torment of my infinite sin.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

### THE RED HEIFER.

(Verses 2, 3.)

The particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and His work, is just this—the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of believers. In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark—

I. That even the true Israelite, the true believer in Christ, is the subject of daily defilement.

We who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the Divine judgment seat. But in the matter of sanctification we are not, as yet, delivered from evil.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact that *we do actually come into contact with sin*, here imaged in the corruption of death (verse 11). We actually touch that dead thing, sin, by overt

acts of transgression. We are in close connection with sin, because sin is in ourselves. Hence we need to be constantly cleansed.

Moreover, we get defilement from companionship with sinners (ver. 14). The Great Physician could walk the leper house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us. It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened therewith, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness. Hence we need daily cleansing, &c.

One reason why we are so constantly defiled is *our want of watchfulness* (ver. 15). You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under heaven without receiving defilement, if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness; but it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrow wounds us.

Sin is so desperately evil, that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean (ver. 16). Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul—a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said, that a thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin, &c.

*Sin even when it is not seen, defiles, . . . .* a man was defiled who touched a grave. Oh, how many graves there are of sin—things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable, and internally abominable! Many of our customs are but the graves of sin, &c.

The Jew was *in danger in the open fields* (ver. 16). You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. We are in daily danger of defilement.

II. That a purification has been provided.

*If it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine.* The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord, &c. You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification, for the unclean person had no right to any of these. The ultimate result in the Israelites' case would have been death. And certainly if you and I, though believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us still the daily defilement of sin, ere long it must end in spiritual death.

The Lord must have provided a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were His wisdom, where His love?* He has provided for everything else. But if this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, a failure would have occurred in a most important point. The love, the wisdom of God demands that there should be such a purification supplied.

*The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this.* There is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. It is inexhaustible. "If any man sin, we have an advocate." He is constantly an intercessor.

*The work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case*, for what is His business but constantly to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us; constantly to quicken, to enlighten, and to comfort?

*Facts show that there is purification for present guilt.* The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David. Peter. *We have tried it ourselves, &c.*

III. The red heifer sets forth, in a most admirable manner, the daily purification for daily sin.

It was a *heifer*. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel—for the whole Church of God; and the Church is always looked upon in Scripture as being the spouse—the bride—always feminine. It was a *red* heifer. Probably the red was chosen from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of

blood, which was always associated with atonement, and putting away of sin. When we think of Christ we always associate Him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. It was a heifer *without spot*. Our Christ had no spot of original sin, no blemish of actual sin. This red heifer was one *whereon never came yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us. "Lo, I come," &c. *The children of Israel provided it*. What for? That every man, and every woman, and every child might say, "I have a share in that heifer," &c. Christ shed His blood for all His people, and they have all a part and all an interest in Him.

There is yet to be observed *what was done with it*. First, *it was taken out of the camp*. Christ suffered without the camp. The red cow *was slain*. A dying Saviour that takes away our sin. *Eleazar dipped his finger in the warm blood*, and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection. Jesus has perfectly presented His bloody sacrifice. All this does not purify. Atonement precedes purification. They then took the body of the slain heifer . . . they consumed it utterly, &c. This sets forth the pangs of the Saviour, how God accounted Him unclean; how He was compelled to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, *the priest threw in cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet*. According to

Maimonides, the cedar-wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop, and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet; so what was seen by the people was the scarlet, which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment—"Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Everything still continues of the red colour, to set forth atonement for sin. Inside this scarlet there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual, and still within this is the cedar-wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness giving acceptance to the whole.

The pith of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. *The cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones, and dung, and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together, and carried away, and laid by in a clean place*. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*,—the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

It was applied by *hyssop*. Hyssop is always a type of faith. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."

Here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

#### RUINOUS NEGLECT.

(Verse 20.)

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation."

The text suggests the following observations:—

##### I. Man is polluted by sin.

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us." And, as Origen said, "Every sin sets a blot upon the soul."

II. God has provided a cleansing element for man's sin.

"There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

III. To be efficacious this cleansing element must be applied to man.

The unclean person had to "purify



himself" by being sprinkled with "the water of separation." There was no cleansing without the sprinkling. If we would be clean we must repent of the sin which defiles us, confess the sin to the great Cleanser, and pray to Him for pardon and purity. But especially, we must believe in the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "The heart," says Dr. Dykes, "which sets out with a hunger after righteousness; which finds that, to be worth having, righteousness must be from the heart outwards; which strives against inward defilement, and, under such a sense of sin as makes it a gentle censor of other men, carries each fresh stain to the blood of sprinkling at the mercy seat: that heart does by effort and degrees attain to purity."

#### IV. Man may neglect to avail himself of this cleansing element.

This neglect may arise from—

1. *Self-righteousness.* There are those who do not feel their need of the cleansing of the blood of Christ. (a)

2. *Unbelief.* Under deep conviction of sin, man sometimes feels that the defilement of his heart is so deep as to defy the efficacy of "the precious blood of Christ:" he does not believe that it has power to cleanse to the uttermost.

3. *Procrastination.* Some purpose

to seek to be cleansed from sin at some future time; they defer the great duty until they "have a convenient season."

Such persons often "resolve and re-resolve, and die the same." How great is the folly! and how tremendous the peril of this neglect!

V. Neglecting to avail himself of this cleansing element, man excludes himself from the highest and richest privileges.

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation." The man who is guilty of this great neglect excludes himself—

1. *From the Church on earth.* Its privileges are for those only who are "purifying their hearts by faith," and "washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb."

2. *From the blessedness of heaven.* No impurity can enter heaven. The redeemed there constitute "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish." Only "the pure in heart shall see God." "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (comp. *Psa.* xxiv. 3, 4; *Rev.* i. 5; vii. 14; xxi. 27). (b)

Let us not be guilty of this ruinous neglect; but let us by faith hasten to the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and there wash and be clean.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we cannot realise the blood until we have realised the sin. Where there is no conviction of sin—conviction amounting to the very anguish of the lost in hell—there can be no felt need of so extreme a remedy as is offered by the outpouring of the blood of Christ. A self-palliating iniquity may be cleansed by water. The light dust which bespots the outer garments may be removed by gentle means. When a man feels that he has not sinned deeply, he is in no mood to receive what he considers the tragic appeals of the gospel; they exceed the case; they destroy themselves by exaggeration; they speak with self-defeating violence. But let another kind of action be set up in the heart; let the man be brought to talk thus with himself—"I have sinned until my very soul is thrust down into hell; my sins have clouded out the mercy of God, so that I see it no longer; I have wounded the Almighty, I

have cut myself off from the fountain of life, I have blown out every light that was meant to help me upward, I am undone, lost, damned," and then he needs no painted cross, no typical sacrament, no ceremonial attitude, no priestly enchantment, he can be met by nothing but the sacrificial blood, the personal blood, the living blood, the precious blood of Christ.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) If a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there he could find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth; no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised; nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, that made him feel at home; nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an

isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined about his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not *bear* the face of the Living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! what have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One: without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord.

Holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is *not* heaven, is not a place of happiness, *except* to the holy. There are bodily indispositions which affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavours become ungrateful to the palate; and indispositions which impair the sight, tinging the fair face of nature with some sickly hue. In like manner there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste, and no man labouring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture calls "the fulness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."

Nay, I will venture to say more than this—it is fearful, but it is right to say it—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. We know how unhappy we are apt to feel at present, when alone in the midst of strangers, or of men of different tastes and habits to ourselves. How miserable, for example, would it be to have to live in a foreign land, among a people whose faces we never saw before, and whose language we could not learn. And this is but a faint illustration of the loneliness of a man of earthly dispositions and tastes thrown into the society of saints and angels. How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like himself, he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in His presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the eternal eye was ever upon him; and that eye of holiness, which is joy and life to

holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change His nature. Holy He must ever be. But while He is holy no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very "heaven that is over their heads" will be "brass" to them.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Have we a hope that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is?" Then must "every man that hath this hope in Him purify himself, even as He is pure." For in at the gates of that City—so unlike the cities of this world—"there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth." That City's streets are of gold that is pure; the river which waters it is a pure river; and the fine linen in which its sainted citizens do walk is clean and white. Even the elder Church could answer its own question,

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Or who shall stand in His holy place?"

by saying,

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

Sin-stained and evil-hearted men as we are, it is here, and now, that this purification must be wrought. What need have we to have often upon our lips the prayer,

"O God, make clean our hearts within us!"

Yet let us not be dismayed. Some little purity of heart he must have begun to possess who ever looked at all into the face of Jesus Christ as the image of His Father's grace and truth. Now, therefore, let us continue to gaze on *Him*, with whatever openness of eye we have to see His glory; for it is the pure-heartedness of Jesus which maketh the disciple's heart pure; and we all, if "with open face" we do but "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So may God change us like the pure-hearted Son, and bring us one day where with all His servants we shall "see His face" in the endless beatific vision of the Celestial City.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

## CHAPTER XX.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the narrative of the third and last stage of the journey of Israel from Sinai to the Promised Land: this narrative is given in this

and the following chapter. This part of the journey commenced at Kadesh, was continued round the land of Edom (chap. xxi. 4), and ended at the heights

of Pisgah, in the country, or fields of Moab (chap. xxi. 20), near the Dead Sea and the Jordan. The events of the Journey seem to be arranged "rather in a classified order than in one that is strictly chronological." Thus the attack upon Israel by the Canaanitish king of Arad (chap. xxi. 1-3) was made during the march from Kadesh to Mount Hor. Chronologically Keil and Del. would place the brief narrative between the first and second clause of ver. 22 of chap. xx.

Verse 1. *The whole congregation.* Probably during the time of their penal wanderings, nearly thirty-eight years, "the congregation" was to some extent broken up and scattered abroad in the wilderness of Paran, so as to facilitate the pasturage of the flocks and herds. Now "the whole congregation" again assembles in the same locality where the sentence of the wandering had been passed upon them.

*The desert of Zin* (see notes on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21).

*In the first month*, of the fortieth year from the Exodus (comp. ver. 22-28 with chap. xxxiii. 38).

*Kadesh* (see notes on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 3. *When our brethren died before the Lord.* It is uncertain to what deaths they refer. Knobel supposes that the reference is to Korah and his company. Keil and Del. say that "the reference is to those who had died one by one during the thirty-seven years."

Verse 6. *They fell upon their faces* (comp. chaps. xiv. 5; xvi. 4).

*The glory of the Lord appeared unto them* (comp. chaps. xiv. 10; xvi. 19).

Verse 8. *Take the rod.* "Not the budding rod of xvii. 7, but that with which the miracles in Egypt had been wrought, and which had been used on a similar occasion at Rephidim, Exod. xvii. 5, sqq."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*The rock.* "The word always used for 'the rock' of Kadesh, in describing the second supply of water, is '*sela*,' or '*cliff*,' in contradistinction to the usual word '*tzur*,'—'rock,' which is no less invariably applied to 'the rock' of Horeb—the scene of the first supply. It may

be difficult to determine the relative meaning of the two words. But it is almost certain that of the two, '*sela*,' like our word '*cliff*,' is the grander and more abrupt feature."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

*The rock before their eyes.* "To the first rock in front of them, and standing in their sight." *M. Nachmanides.*

Verse 9. *Moses took the rod from before the Lord.* The rod seems to have been laid up in the sanctuary, hence it is said to be taken "from before the Lord."

Verses 10, 11. This miraculous supply of water from the "cliff" is different from that from the rock (Exod. xvii. 1-7). "The first happened in the first year of the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt; this, when their journey was about to terminate, thirty-nine years after their departure. The first was an occasion to Moses of obeying punctually the orders of God; this is narrated as a sorrowful period, in which this legislator lost sight of the great motives which ought to have induced him to believe what God had spoken. The first happened in the desert of Sin on the mountain of Horeb; this in the desert of Zin on the frontier of Idumea."—*Saurin.*

Verse 10. *Hear now, ye rebels, &c.* (comp. Psa. cvi. 33).

Verse 12. *Because ye believed Me not, &c.* "What was the offence for which Moses was excluded from the Promised Land? It appears to have consisted in some or all of the following particulars: 1. God had commanded him (ver. 8) to take the rod in his hand, and go and speak to the rock, and it should give forth water. It seems Moses did not think speaking would be sufficient, therefore he smote the rock without any command so to do. 2. He did this twice, which certainly in this case indicated a great perturbation of spirit, and want of attention to the presence of God. 3. He permitted his spirit to be carried away by a sense of the people's disobedience, and thus, being provoked, he was led to speak unadvisedly with his lips: '*Hear now, ye REBELS*' (ver. 10). 4. He did not acknowledge GOD in the



miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honour to himself and Aaron: '*Must we fetch you water out of this rock?*' Thus it plainly appears that they did not properly believe in God and did not honour Him in the sight of the people; for in their presence they seem to express a doubt whether the thing could be possibly done. As Aaron appears to have been consenting in the above particulars, therefore he is also excluded from the Promised Land."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 13. *Meribah, i.e., strife.* In chap. xxvii. 14, it is spoken of as "*Meribah in Kadesh,*" to distinguish it from *Meribah in Horeb* (Exod. xvii. 7).

*He was sanctified in them.* He vindicated His own sanctity by putting to shame the unbelieving murmuring of the people by the miraculous supply of water, and by punishing Moses and Aaron for their unbelief.

Verse 14. *Thy brother Israel.* The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob or Israel.

Verse 16. *Sent an angel.* ("Of Exod. xiv. 19. The term is to be understood as importing generally the supernatural guidance under which Israel was."—*Speaker's Comm.* Knobel interprets it as signifying the pillar of cloud and fire. "In it was present '*the angel of God*' (Exod. xiv. 19), *i.e.,* the Divine presence, personally; in it appeared '*the glory of Jehovah*' (Exod. xvi. 10; xl. 34; chap. xvi. 42). It was an elementary appearance, made use of by Him who appointed and rules the elements, to signify to His people His immediate presence and guardianship."—*Alford* on Exod. xiii. 21.

*Kadesh, a city, i.e., Kadesh-barnea* (chap. xxxii. 8). It is probable that Barnea was the older or original name of the town, and that it was called Kadesh because of the events which took place there, and are recorded in chaps. xiii. 26—xiv., or of those which are recorded in this chapter (vers. 7-13), and that in those instances in which we find the name Kadesh in earlier portions of Scripture history it is applied proleptically, or by anticipation. "The

nearest approximation which can be given to a site for the city of Kadesh, may be probably attained by drawing a circle from the pass *Es-Sufa*, at the radius of about a day's journey; its south-western quadrant would intersect the wilderness of Paran, or *Et-Tih*, which is there overhung by the superimposed plateau of the mountain of the Amorites; while its south-eastern one will cross what has been designated as the wilderness of Zin. This seems to satisfy all the conditions of the passages of Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which refer to it. The nearest site in harmony with this view which has yet been suggested (Robinson, ii. 175), is undoubtedly the *Ain el-Weibeh*."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 17. *Let us pass through thy country.* The entrance to Canaan from the South was very difficult by reason of the intervening mountains, which were lofty and steep. Moses, therefore, proposed to enter it from the east, across the Jordan. "In order to gain the banks of the Jordan by the shortest route they had to march nearly due east from Kadesh, and pass through the heart of the Edomitish mountains. These are lofty and precipitous, traversed by two or three narrow defiles, of which one (the *Wady Ghuweir*) only is practicable for an army. Hence the necessity of the request, v. 17."—*Speaker's Comm.* *Ain el-Weibeh* "is nearly opposite the *Wady Ghuweir*, the great opening into the steep eastern wall of the Arabah, and, therefore, the most probable 'highway' by which to 'pass through the border' of Edom."—*Biblical Dict.*

*The King's high way.* Heb. "the King's way," *i.e.,* "the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the 'sultan's road' (*Derb es Sultan*) or 'emperor's road,' as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19. *I will only, without, &c.* Heb. "*lit. 'it is nothing at all; I will go through with my feet.'*" *i.e.,* we want

no great thing ; we will only make use of the high road."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *And Edom came out against him.* "The Israelites without awaiting at Kadesh the return of their ambassadors, commenced their eastward march. At the tidings of their approach the Edomites mustered their forces to oppose them; and on crossing the Arabah they found their ascent through the mountains barred. The notice of this is inserted here to complete the narrative; but in order of time it comes after the march of v. 22."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 22. *Mount Hor.* Heb. lit. "Hor the mountain." הֹר *Hor*, "is an old form for הָרַר," *Har.*—*Fuerst.* So that the meaning of the name is simply "the mountain of mountains." "It is one of the very few spots connected with the wanderings of the Israelites which admits of no reasonable doubt. The proofs of the identity of *Jebel Harin*, as it is now called, with Mount Hor, are—(1) The situation 'by the coast of the land of Edom,' where it is emphatically 'the mountain' (*Hor*) Num. xx. 23. (2) The statement of Josephus (*Ant.* IV. iv. 7), that Aaron's

death occurred on a high mountain enclosing Petra. (3) The modern name and traditional sanctity of the mountain as connected with Aaron's tomb. The mountain is marked far and near by its double top, which rises like a huge castellated building from a lower base, and on one of these is the Mahometan chapel erected out of the remains of some earlier and more sumptuous building over the supposed grave."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

"It is almost unnecessary to state that it is situated on the eastern side of the great valley of the Arabah, the highest and most conspicuous of the whole range of the sandstone mountains of Edom, having close beneath it on its eastern side—though strange to say the two are not visible to each other—the mysterious city of Petra. . . . Its height, according to the latest measurement, is 4800 feet (Eng.) above the Mediterranean, that is to say, about 1700 feet above the town of Petra, 4000 above the level of the Arabah, and more than 6000 above the Dead Sea."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 26. *Strip Aaron of his garments* (comp. Lev. viii. 7-9).

## THE DEATH OF MIRIAM.

(Verse 1.)

Two preliminary points are suggested by the assembling of "the whole congregation in the desert of Zin":

First: *The loss that sin inflicts upon a people.* After nearly thirty-eight years the entire nation is congregated in the place where the sentence of penal wandering had been passed upon them. For all these years the sin of the rebellious people arrested their national history. Sin, whether in the individual or the nation, checks progress, and inflicts loss and injury.

Second: *The control of God over human history.* When the time fixed in the Divine purposes for the re-assembling of the people arrives, they again gather themselves together. The hand of the

Lord is on the affairs of men, directing, restraining, overruling them for good. "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

The death of Miriam suggests the following observations—

I. Death terminates the most protracted life.

Assuming that Miriam was 10 or 12 years old when Moses was born (and her conduct as watcher over her infant brother [Exod. iii. 4-8] indicates that she was of fully that age), she must have been at the time of her death 130 years old. Hers was a long life; but death closed it. He whose life-pilgrimage is longest, reaches the end of his journey at last. "Yea, though he live

a thousand years twice told: do not all go to one place?" (a)

II. Death terminates the most eventful life.

Very eventful had been the life of Miriam.

1. *The girl watching over the life of her infant brother* (Exod. iii. 4-8). When we reflect upon the destiny marked out for her brother by God, how important was her duty at that time!

2. *The experienced woman sharing in the interest and action of the stirring events which led to the great emancipation from Egypt.* It appears to us a moral certainty that those events awakened her deep interest and aroused her to earnest effort.

3. *The prophetess leading the exultant songs and dances of a triumphant people* (Exod. xv. 20, 21).

4. *The envious woman aspiring after equality with, and speaking against her greater brother* (chap. xii. 1, 2). She was of a noble nature, yet she was capable of meanness, detraction, &c. Here is the blot upon her otherwise fair reputation.

5. *The guilty woman smitten with leprosy because of the sin* (chap. xii. 9, 10). Her distinguished position and gifts could not avert from her the just punishment of her sin.

6. *The leprous woman healed in answer to the prayer of the brother whom she had spoken against* (chap. xii. 13-15). The most stirring and eventful life is closed by death, as well as the quiet and monotonous one.

III. Death terminates the most distinguished life.

1. *Miriam was distinguished by her gifts.* Prophetic gifts are ascribed to her. "Miriam, the prophetess," is her acknowledged title (Exod. xv. 20). "The prophetic power showed itself in her under the same form as that which it assumed in the days of Samuel and David — poetry, accompanied with music and processions" (comp. Exod. xv. 20, 21; Judg. v.; 1 Sam. x. 5). Death spares not even the most richly gifted of our race. (b)

2. *Miriam was distinguished by her position.* A very high position is given to her in the Sacred Scriptures. In Micah vi. 4, she is spoken of as one of the three deliverers of the enslaved people: "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." "How grand was her position is implied in the cry of anguish which goes up from both her brothers" when she was smitten with leprosy. "Alas, my lord! . . . Let her not be as one dead," &c. (chap. xiii. 11-13). "And it is not less evident in the silent grief of the nation. 'The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.'" It is manifest also in the national mourning on account of her death; for, according to Josephus (Ant. IV. iv. 6), "they mourned for her thirty days." Death brings down persons of the most exalted rank, and lays them low as those of the meanest station (comp. Job. iii. 13-19). (c)

IV. Death, by reason of sin, sometimes terminates life earlier than it otherwise would have done.

Miriam was not of the faithful few who entered the Promised Land. She sinned in murmuring and speaking against Moses; and, therefore, she must die and find a lonely grave in the desert of Zin. How many lives are cut short in our day by violation of sanitary laws, by gluttony, and by drunkenness!

V. Death sometimes terminates life with suggestions of a life beyond.

It was so in the case of Miriam. Can we think that the gifts with which she was so richly endowed, and the treasures of experience which in her long and eventful life she had gathered, were all lost at death? This would be in utter opposition to the analogy of the Divine arrangements in the universe. In nature we can trace no sign of waste; the most scrupulous economy may be observed in all the provinces of the material realm. Can we imagine that, under the rule of the same Divine Being, there exists in the spiritual realm such waste as would be involved in the extinction of those who are gifted



in mind, ripe in experience, and holy in character? The Israelites did not leave Miriam in the desert of Zin: her body only remained there; her spirit, herself, passed swiftly to the great and glorious fellowship of the good "beyond the veil." (d)

"The dead are like the stars by day,  
Withdrawn from mortal eye;  
But not extinct, they hold their way  
In glory through the sky.

Spirits from bondage thus set free  
Vanish amidst immensity,  
Where human thought, like human sight,  
Fails to pursue their trackless flight."

### Conclusion.

Since death is inevitable, it is the duty and interest of every one so to live that it shall be the door of admission into endless and blessed life. (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All forms recipient of life die sometime. Some few may be privileged to survive the rest, even for thousands of years, as happens with certain trees, but the same death which in regard to the children of men, while it surprises many, skips not one, at last overpowers the most tenacious. "Come like shadows, so depart," is the law of the entire material creation,—in fact, as great a law as that it *lives*. . . . Birth, growth, and arriving at maturity, as completely imply decay and death as the source of a river implies the termination of it, or as spring and summer imply corn-fields and reaping. Hence, whatever the vigour and the powers of repair that may pertain to any given structure, whatever resistance it may offer to the shocks of Ages, Time, sooner or later, dissolves it;—careful, however, to renew whatever it takes away, and to convert, invariably, every end into a new beginning. There is not a grave in the whole circuit of nature that is not at the same moment a cradle.—*L. H. Grindon*.

(b) Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the merest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown, impalpable powder, they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Tophet? Ah! friends, you have to die. Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh! if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap; they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes. The ashes of an oak in a chimney are no epitaph of that, to tell me how high, or how large that was; it tells me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless too; it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing. As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldst not, as of a prince whom thou couldst not look upon, will trouble thine eyes

if the wind blow it thither; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the churchyard into the church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the church into the churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, 'This is the patrician, this is the noble flour, and this the yeoman, this the plebeian bran?'—*Dr. J. Donne*.

(d) We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over, ready to be quenched. Ah! my brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death. The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and ere long even the pitcher shall be so remodelled as to become an aid to that light; its present breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it moulders into dust, shall live again; these weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them; these hands which grasp to-day the sword of conflict shall wave the palm-branch of triumph.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." That is the end of trouble. Now sorrow is crowned with hope! Now the gate is thrown open! Now the angel sits upon the stone! Now the emergent Christ walks forth, light and glorious as the sun in the heavens! Now the lost is found! Now all the stars hang like gems, and jewels, and treasures for us! Now, since Christ says that out of all these experiences He shall bring forth life, even as his own life was brought forth out of the tomb, what is there that we need trouble ourselves about?—*H. W. Beecher*.

(e) We shall all die! Do not let us postpone the intimation of our need of the Son of God until we are so faint that we can only receive him at the side of our death-bed. Do let us be more decent, more courteous, more civil. We shall all die! That is a fact that men have never been able to reason out of human history. If they could come to me and say, "We will guarantee you shall never die,

you shall always be as you are—young, and strong, and active, and prosperous," then I might incline an ear to their reasonings more deferentially than I am disposed to do at present. But when they are talking to me against religion and against the deeper life, against faith and spiritual love and service of the unseen, what do I behold? Oh, this: Over their shoulder a grim, ghastly spectre called *Death*!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Be ready, minister, see to it that thy church be in good order, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee; be ready, parent, see that your children are brought up in the fear of

God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, you that are busy in the world, see that your affairs are correct, see that you serve God with all your heart, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. O may we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

## THE PRIVATIONS OF MAN AND THE RESOURCES OF GOD.

(Verses 2-11.)

**I. There are privations in the pilgrimage of human life.**

"And there was no water for the congregation." Man is a dependent creature. Every human being has to endure privation in some form or another. Even the wealthiest of men find that there are some desirable things which wealth cannot purchase. But in the case before us the Israelites were suffering from want, not of the luxuries or comforts of life, but of one of its great necessities: there was a great lack of water. In our pilgrimage we are often without things which we have regarded as essential to our life. One man thinks that without *health* his life would be worthless; yet he has to submit to its loss for a time. To another man *prosperity* seems essential; to another, *friendship*, or some one *friend or relative*; yet of these they are sometimes deprived. Life, in our view, has many privations. This characteristic of our pilgrimage is for wise and gracious ends. Privation should remind us that we are pilgrims—incite us to confide in God—and discipline our spirits into patience and power.

**II. The privations in the pilgrimage of life sometimes develop the evil tendencies of human nature.**

"And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses," &c. (vers. 2-5). Here privation is made the occasion of an outrageous

rebellion. The conduct of the people was—

1. *Unreasonable.* Why should they blame Moses and Aaron? Why chide Moses? He was not responsible for the lack of water. And as their leader, he was acting under Divine direction. It was neither reasonable nor fair to assail Moses and Aaron as they did.

2. *Cruel.* Moses and Aaron are of sorrowful heart because of the death of their distinguished sister; they need sympathy and consolation from the people; but instead thereof, they are unjustly and bitterly assailed. The feelings of our common humanity should have effectually restrained the people from treating their bereaved and sorrowing leaders after this fashion.

3. *Ungrateful.* The many and great mercies which God had bestowed upon them seem to be all and utterly lost sight of in their present trial. Not one word of thankfulness, but many words of complaint do they give utterance to. (a)

4. *Degraded.* "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs," &c. How unspeakably mournful is the degradation of manhood when human beings estimate "figs" more highly than freedom! They prefer slavery with figs and vines and pomegranates than liberty without them. Such a preference indicates their lack of true manhood, and the serfdom of their spirits. (b)

5. *Audaciously wicked.* How awful is the impiety to which they gave expression in their insolent interrogations! To wish that they had died by the stroke of God's judgment (ver. 3); to falsely impute the wickedest design to their true-hearted and God-appointed leader (ver. 4); to resent the emancipation which the Lord so graciously and gloriously wrought for them (ver. 5)—how atrociously wicked is all this!

The trials of life never leave us as they find us. Unless they, by the grace of God, are the occasion of blessing to us, they will lead, as in the case of these rebellious Israelites, to deterioration of character by the development of its evil attributes. They will lead either to increased patience and acquiescence in the will of God, or to increased fretfulness and rebellion against His will, &c. (c)

III. The privations in the pilgrimage of life, and the evils which are sometimes occasioned by them, impel the good to seek help of God.

"And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces." In their trial they betook themselves to God in prayer. Their action in this is very suggestive. It implies—

1. *Consciousness of need.* They felt their inability to deal with the disaffected and rebellious people; they sought the direction of Heaven, &c.

2. *Faith in the sufficiency of the Divine help.* The promptitude with which they resorted to the tabernacle, and cast themselves down in prayer to God, indicates their confidence in Him as their Helper. They believed in His wisdom for their guidance, &c.

3. *Faith in the efficacy of prayer to obtain the Divine help.* Moses and Aaron had proved convincingly the power of prayer on several occasions. "Ask, and it shall be given you," &c.

4. *Faith in the efficacy of unspoken prayer.* There is no record of any words addressed by them to God. The probability is, that their feelings and desires were too deep and strong to

be expressed in words. There may be true and effective prayer without speech. The holiest and profoundest longings of our souls cannot be expressed. In this respect they resemble the prayers of the Divine Spirit who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here, then, at the throne of Divine grace, is the refuge of the godly soul in time of trial. This refuge is (1) ever-accessible; (2) all-sufficient, &c.

IV. The privations in the pilgrimage of life are sometimes removed in answer to the prayer of the good.

"And the glory of the Lord appeared unto them, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod," &c. (vers. 6-11). Thus in answer to the prayer of Moses and Aaron, the privation of the people was removed by this copious supply of water. Concerning this supply of water, notice—

1. It was *Divine*. In a special sense it was the gift of God. Before it was given His "glory appeared;" He directed His servant what to do to obtain it; He bestowed it.

2. It was *miraculous*. Speaking to a cliff, or smiting it with a rod, were not natural means for obtaining water. But this water was supernaturally given. The miracle was manifest and indisputable. It was wrought in the presence of the assembled people. Spiritual blessings transcend nature. Redemption is supernatural in its origin, supernatural in its great Agent, &c.

3. It was *unmerited*. This murmuring, rebellious congregation did not deserve any benefit at the hand of God. He blessed them because He is "rich in mercy." Mankind did not merit redemption. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How great are our demerits! yet God blesses us with the treasures of His grace, &c.

4. It was *abundant*. "The water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts." How abundant are spiritual blessings! God "abundantly pardons"; He "makes all grace abound," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 8, 11). (d)



5. It was *free*. The water, without any charge or any restriction, was available to all. An emblem of the blessings of salvation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c. (Isa. lv. 1). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (e)

6. It was *bestowed in answer to prayer*. Moses and Aaron sought His help in their extremity, and He stilled the rebellious people by removing the privation from which they suffered. And in all the privations of the pilgrimage of our life, if we seek Him in prayer He will either remove the privation, or give us grace to endure it patiently; He will either lighten our burden or increase our strength. His resources are adequate to all the necessities of our pilgrimage. He is ever ready to communicate freely of these resources to all who seek Him.

"Am I thirsting? He will guide me  
Where refreshing waters flow;  
Faint or feeble, He'll provide me  
Grace for every want I know."

—*Monsell*.

#### Conclusion.

1. *Guard against the sin of which Israel was guilty*. In time of trial, do not murmur; be patient, &c.

2. *Believe in and make use of the efficacy of prayer*. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," &c.

3. *Exercise constant trust in God*. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

"Then, my soul, since God doth love thee,  
Faint not, droop not, do not fear;  
Though His heaven is high above thee,  
He Himself is ever near."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we must cease to wonder at them, and learn to confess our own corruption of heart, and proneness to yield and fall down in time of temptation, unless we be stayed up by the mighty hand of God. For albeit He be most gracious and merciful unto us, hedgeth us round about with many blessings, and compasseth us with riches of grace on every side, yet we forget them all if any one cross do any way lie upon us. If the Lord touch us with sickness, as with His little finger; with losses, with crosses, with poverty, or any misery, such is our impatience, that we always dwell upon the meditation of that want, we look upon it with our eyes, we handle it with our hands, we toss it in our minds, and never remember the multitude of His mercies, the peace of a good conscience, the loving countenance of the Lord, the seal of our adoption, the assurance of our salvation, the sweet taste of His love shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; so that one trouble doth more daunt us and strike us to the heart than many blessings can comfort and refresh us. But God, taking away outward blessings, giveth spiritual to His children, and doth sweeten the bitterness of the cross with inward consolation, and doth recompense it with heavenly grace, whereby we gain more in the spirit than we lose in the flesh.—*W. Attersoll*.

I remember in our Baptist martyrology the story of one of the Baptists of Holland escaping from his persecutors. A river was frozen over, and the good man crossed it safely, but his enemy was of greater bulk,

and the ice gave way under him. The Baptist, like a child of God as he was, turned round and rescued his persecutor just as he was sinking beneath the ice to a certain death. And what did the wretch do? As soon as ever he was safely on the shore he seized the man who had saved his life, and dragged him off to the prison from which he was only taken to be put to death! We wonder at such inhumanity; we are indignant at such base returns—but the returns which the ungodly make to God are baser far. I wonder myself as I talk to you—I wonder that I speak so calmly on so terribly humbling a theme; and, remembering our past lives, and our long ingratitude to God, I marvel that we do not turn this place into one vast Bochim, or place of weeping, and mingle our tears in a flood, with expressions of deep shame and self-abhorrence for our dealings towards God.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(b) There are others who seek how much they can call their own, by whatever means; of how much benefit they can hold a monopoly; from how large a place in God's universe they can keep other men off, and how much envy they can rouse in rivals and neighbours. These have never mastered their baser and greedier instincts, and so far have never known the Divine joy of being blessed for their benefactions, and have never tasted of the peace that passeth understanding. Very often God punishes us by letting us have what we seek. . . .

To the seekers of mere material and selfish comfort, one serious consideration is presented

by the progress of history. That kind of search is sinking. Every new day that breaks into the sky degrades it; both because new lights are stationed about it, in our educational and industrial wakefulness, to show its shame, and because the practical tendencies of the time force upon materialism a more and more hard and sottish character. In more imaginative periods, romance threw about idolatry at least the graces of fancy, and made it poetical. Now it is either shrewd or stolid. It is the idolatry of the arithmetic, the stock list, and the palate; not of fable and heroism. The noblest element has vanished. It is bare gluttony. If you are going to worship the animal, then return to the inventions of Egyptian and Grecian genius—"the fair humanities of old religion." Give us back at least the simplicity of fetishism with its sensuality. Rebuild the Pantheon. Relight the fires on Pagan altars. Repopulate the woods with dryads, and the water with nymphs. Anything rather than the gross surfeit of appetite, and the clinking creed of dollars! And if you cannot do that, take it as a sober hint that God's providence does not mean to have materialists in the world at all. Seek something worthier of your humanity.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(c) Many men are distressing themselves, when they think of their trials, by imagining that they have done something wrong, or God never could have sent such afflictions to them personally, or to their household. That is a mistake. There are trials that are simply tests—not punishments; trials of faith and patience—not rods sent to scourge men because they have been doing some particular evil thing. God's people are tried. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The honour is not in the trial; it is in the spirit in which the trial is borne. Take the trial impatiently, with murmuring against God, and we shall be the worse for our trial, the poorer for our suffering. Take the trial as a veiled angel sent by our Father to say things to us which no other messenger could so suitably convey, then even the rod shall be precious to us, and the herald's utterances of God shall have music in them that shall comfort, and revive, and cheer the heart.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) Stand still awhile, and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God! A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head, see it welling up in the cove-

nant of grace, in the eternal purposes of infinite wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fount; it is a very Geyser, leaping aloft in fulness of power; the springs of the sea are not comparable therewith. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love, or measure the depths of infinite grace. Follow now the stream; mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the cross' foot it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash, see how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them, they are made whole! See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wheresoever this stream cometh all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity; these all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with gladsome eye to note the thousand barques of fairest sail, which scud along the mighty river with colours flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity! Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth, but from its lowest depths, and all along its unruffled bosom, I hear a voice which saith, "Herein is love."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) Freely, that may be lavishly, ungrudgingly, with fulness and overflow, yet without upbraiding. Or, freely may mean without price or tax, without money as the air is given, without price as the sunlight is poured forth. So "freely given to us of God." Why this is most God-like wholly. No good thing doth he withhold from them that walk uprightly. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us *all things*?"—ALL things,—ALL things! "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

## THE SIN OF MOSES.

(Verse 10.)

### Introduction—

The facts recorded.

I. What there was sinful in Moses.

1. There was disobedience to the Divine command.

2. There was immoderate heat and passion.

3. There was unbelief.

4. It was all publicly done, and so the more dishonouring to God.

**II. What we may learn from this tragical story.**

1. What a holy and jealous God He is with whom we have to do.

2. The Lord's children need not think it strange if they get abundance to exercise that grace in which they most excel.

3. Let us not be surprised to see or hear the saints failing even in the exercise of that grace wherein they most excel.

4. Never think yourselves secure from falling till ye be at the end of your race.

5. What need we have to guard constantly our unruly passions, and put a bridle on our lips.

6. Though God pardons the iniquity of His servants, yet He will take vengeance on their inventions (Psa. xcix. 8).

7. If God punishes His children thus for falling into the snare, how shall they escape who lay the snare for them?

8. Observe the ingenuousness of the penmen of the Holy Scripture—Moses records his own fault.—*T. Boston.*

### THE ROCK AT KADESH, AN EMBLEM OF CHRIST.

(Verse 11, and 1 Cor. x. 4, last clause.)

Jehovah is frequently spoken of by the Sacred Writers as a Rock (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. xxi. 2; Psa. xviii. 2; xxxviii. 1; xxxi. 2; xlii. 9; *et al.*). And St. Paul, referring to the rock at Horeb, and probably to this one at Kadesh also, says, "That Rock was Christ"—*i.e.*, a type of Christ. *This rock is an emblem of Christ—*

**I. In its characteristics.**

1. *Permanence.* How firm and stable are the rocks! Generations of men come and go; but the grand old cliffs remain. Of all earthly things they are the most abiding. "The Son abideth for ever." "Christ abideth for ever." "He ever liveth to make intercession." "I am alive for evermore." Jesus Christ is the "sure foundation" (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11; 1. Pet. ii. 6, 7). (a)

2. *Unchangeableness.* Geologists tell us of changes even in the rocks; but apparently and to the ordinary observer they are immutable. They are the best symbols on the earth of the unchangeable. How unchangeable is our Lord and Saviour! "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

**II. In the water which flowed from it.**

Christianity and its blessings are frequently compared to pure water in the Bible (comp. Isa. lv. 1; John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38; Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17). There are several points of analogy between this water and Gospel blessings. Both are—

1. *Necessary.* Water is essential to life. Spiritual life is impossible apart from Christ (1 John v. 12). (b)

2. *Pure.* This water was from a cliff, not from a pond: it had been filtered in the hills, and streamed forth pure and bright to the thirsty multitude. The blessings of Christianity are both pure and purifying.

3. *Refreshing.* Mark how water refreshes the parched earth; how it revives the fading, drooping plant or flower; how it re-animates the pilgrim exhausted by thirst. "A Man shall be as rivers of water in a dry place." (Comp. Isa. xxxv. 6, 7; xli. 18; xlv. 3). (c)

4. *Abundant.* (On this and the following points see on verses 2-11). (d)

5. *Free.* (e)

6. *Supernatural.*

7. *Divine.*

**Application.**

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here is simple existence, with no note of beginning or end. Our Lord says not, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am." He claims pre-existence indeed, but He does not merely claim pre-existence; He unveils a consciousness of Eternal Being. He speaks as one on Whom time has no effect, and for Whom it has no meaning. He is the I AM of ancient Israel; He knows no past, as He knows no future; He is unbeginning, unending Being; He is the eternal "Now."—*Canon Liddon*.

(b) Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day, sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land; what would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life; his tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven, and he himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon Him. Now, Jesus Christ is the water of life, and the bread of life, to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him; and as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Life and the food that sustaineth life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are for your souls stored up in Jesus.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Water typifies the Gospel by its refreshment. How different you feel after you get a glass of cool water, or after you have plunged into the bath! On a hot summer day there is nothing that so soon brings you back from a bad temper or a disturbed spirit, and puts you into a happy frame of mind and body; as cold water. Blessed be God for water! I love to hear it fall in the shower and dash in the cascade, and to see it rush from the ice-pitcher into the clear glass. Thank God for water! Clear water! bright water! beautiful water! But I have to tell you there is a better refreshment even than that. There was a time when you were hounded of convictions. Sinai thundered. The wrath of God cried, "Fly!" Justice cried, "Fly!" Your own fears cried, "Fly!" Mercy said, "Come! Come!" and you plunged like a hart into the waterbrooks, and out of that flood your soul came up cool, and clean, and radiant; and you looked around and said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." There came a time of perplexity in your heart. You lost your property. The gold eagles took wings and flew away. Death, like a black hawk, swooped upon the family brood, and the children were gone. You measured your life from groan to groan, from loss to loss, from tear to tear. You said from your distressed spirit, "Oh! that I had wings like

a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." From the depths of your fevered soul you called out, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" As when you have been walking in a thick wood on a hot summer day you heard the dash of fountains, and your spirit was cheered; so, while you were listening for the answer, the promise of God dropped cool and fresh and sparkling from the Throne: "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." You rejoiced at the thought of the fountain. Your fevered soul thrilled with the cool touch, and you cried, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it. Water! cold water! bright water! everlasting water! bursting from the Throne!"—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(d) Water typifies the Gospel because of its abundance. When we pour the water from the pitcher into the glass we have to be careful or the glass will overflow, and we stop when the water has come to the rim. But when God, in summer, pours out His showers, He keeps pouring on, and pouring on, until the grass-blades cry, "Enough!" and the flowers, "Enough!" and the trees, "Enough!" but God keeps pouring on and pouring on until the fields are soaked, and the rivers overflow, and the cisterns are all filled, and the great reservoirs are supplied, and there is water to turn the wheel, water to slake the thirst of the city, water to cleanse the air, water to wash the hemisphere. Abundance! And so with this glorious Gospel. Enough for one; enough for all. Thousands have come to this fountain, and have drank to the satisfaction of their souls. Other thousands will come; and yet the fountain will not be exhausted.

Just after the battle of Antietam, with some of the other members of the Christian Commission, I went down to help look after the wounded; and on the afternoon of a very hot day I came to a pump of water. I saw a soldier, with musket, guarding the pump. I put out my cup, and he filled it about a quarter full with water. I said, "Why do you not fill my cup?" He replied, "Water is scarce! Here is a great army, and we do not know where to get water after this is gone; and I have orders to give no more than that." What a poor supply for a thirsty man on a hot day! But, glory be to God! that in this Gospel fountain there is water enough for all the armies of the earth, and for all the armies of heaven. You cannot drink it dry. I stand this evening offering this Gospel to all who are here, with just as much confidence that there is enough for them as though there were only two or three persons present.—*Ibid.*

(e) Water typifies the Gospel by its freeness. On this hot Sabbath, after the cows break through the alders into the meadow to drink, how much do they pay for that which they

drink? The humming-bird drinks from the wine glass of the honeysuckle. How much is it a glass? There is a tax on the city water, but no tax upon the great rivers that roll in perpetual volume to the sea. How much will the world pay for all the showers that this summer refreshed the cornfields? Nothing. It is free, and so is this glorious gospel. It is free in its pardon, hope, and salvation, to all who will accept it. Here is a man who says, "I will pay for it, or I will not have it. I am

an independent man; and I will give so much to have my soul redeemed. I will endow a college; or I will establish a school; or I will build a church, and in that way purchase my salvation!" Or he says, "I will do some grand, good works; and God, I know, will accept them." God says, "Away with your good works as a purchase for salvation! Take this Gospel for nothing, or never take it. It is free." "Without money and without price" is this Gospel fountain.—*Ibid.*

## THE SINS OF HOLY MEN AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.

(Verses 12, 13.)

The sin of Moses and Aaron seems to have included—

First: *Want of faith.* "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not." "It seems to have been," says Dean Stanley, "a feeling of distrust. 'Can we bring water out of the cliff?' (Num. xx. 10; LXX. *μη ἐξάξομεν*, 'surely we cannot')." The smiting of the cliff twice does not indicate the calmness of faith, but the presence of doubt rather, "as if the promise of God 'would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part.'" There was not, we believe, positive unbelief or distrust of the Divine word; but, on the other hand, there was not the full assurance of faith which they should have manifested.

Second: *Irritation of spirit.* The impatience of Moses is manifest in his speech,—“Hear now, ye rebels;” and in his action,—“He smote the rock twice.” Worn out by the repeated and aggravating perversities of the people, the man of God breaks down, and for a moment his long patience is overborne by petulance. (Comp. *Psa. cvi. 32, 33*).  
(a)

Third: *Departure from Divine directions.* (1) They fell short of the Divine orders in not speaking to the cliff. “Speak ye unto the cliff before their eyes,” said the Lord; but they did not do so. (2) They went beyond the Divine directions in speaking to the people, and smiting the rock. The directions of God never exceed His requirements. If His commands are particular and in detail, He requires that

our obedience also shall be particular and in detail.

Fourth: *Assumption of power.* The question, “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” does not give honour to God. It is such as they might have asked if by their own unaided efforts they were about to obtain water for the people.

Fifth: *The publicity of the whole.* “Ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” It was an aggravation of their offence that it was committed in the presence of the assembled congregation. They occupied an eminent position; they were the representatives of Jehovah to the people, the eyes of the people were fixed upon them; they should therefore have been more careful to honour God before the people. On a former occasion Moses had been guilty of unbelief towards God (*chap. xi. 22, 23*), and God rebuked him for his sin. That however was in private; while this was in public, and accordingly meets with severer punishment from the Lord.

The text leads us to consider—

### I. The liability of the good to sin.

Moses was one of the holiest and noblest men that ever lived, yet here he sins against God. “In him there was a rare combination of intellectual and moral excellences. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. It stands out in bold and impressive relief. His was a noble heart; one purer or truer never beat within a human bosom.

Noble by nature, he was nobler still by the height and force of his virtue." But he was not infallible; while he remained in this world he was exposed to temptation, and liable to fall into sin. And under the strain of the provocation of these perverse and rebellious people, he did, alas! fall into sin. Let the great and good be warned. You are safe only as you exercise constant watchfulness, humility, and trust in God. (b)

II. The danger of good men failing in those excellences which most distinguish them.

Moses was pre-eminent for meekness (chap. xii. 3); but here his meekness fails, and he is petulant and stern. Abraham was celebrated for his faith in God (Rom. iv. 11; Gal. iii. 9); yet upon two occasions his faith failed for a time (Gen. xii. 12; xx. 2, 11-13). Elijah was one of the most fearless and heroic of men; yet he fled from the threatened vengeance of Jezebel in a very panic of alarm, and remained for some time in a state of deep dejection (1 Kings xix. 1-4, 10, 14). Peter was unquestionably courageous; yet the charges of a maid-servant reduced him for a time to an utter coward (Luke xxii. 55-60). Guard well the strong points of your character; for there the greatest danger often is. This seems paradoxical; nevertheless it is true. The points of our character which we know are weak we watch and fortify; in our strong points we feel so secure that we deem it unnecessary to exercise vigilance concerning them; and this sense of security leads us sometimes to fail in those strong points—in those virtues which are most fully ours. (c)

III. The impartiality of the administration of the Divine government.

Moses and Aaron were both greatly honoured of God—Moses especially so; yet God punishes them for sin, as well as others. "Because ye believed not Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I gave them." Surely, this was no slight punishment. After all

their brilliant and fondly-cherished hopes of possessing the "good land," after all they had done and borne as leaders of the rebellious people, the honour of leading them into the land shall not be theirs; they shall not even enter therein. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." If a saint of God violate His laws, he must bear the penalties which he has incurred. The dark crimes which stained the spirit and life of the man after God's own heart never ceased to trouble him after days. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." (d)

IV. The great guilt of those who by their wickedness occasion sin in the good.

If Moses and Aaron be "thus punished that sin by other men's occasions, how much more shall they be punished that are the occasions, or give the occasions! Moses and Aaron had never thus offended had the people not murmured; and many a sin should be daily uncommitted did not some allure, tempt, and provoke, or by some means give occasion thereof."—*Babington*.

"Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." He who not only sins himself, but by temptation or otherwise occasions sin in others, shall be "beaten with many stripes."

V. The means which God uses to deter men from sin.

"This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." The name was changed from Kadesh-barnea to Meribah-kadesh as a memorial of the sin of the people, and of Moses and Aaron, that others might take warning and shun sin. Many are the means which God uses to keep man from sin; memorials of human sins and Divine judgments, expostulations with the sinner, warnings against sin, encouragements and aids to obedience, are all so employed. By the voice of history, by the Law from Sinai, by the Gospel of His Son, by the Cross of Jesus Christ, by the influences of His Spirit, God is ever crying to the sinner,



"Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

**Application.**

Let Christians guard against temptation; let them cultivate a watchful and

prayerful spirit. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Be sober, be vigilant," &c. (e)

**ILLUSTRATIONS.**

(a) If anger arises in thy breast, instantly seal up thy lips, and let it not go forth; for like fire when it wants vent, it will suppress itself. It is good in a fever to have a tender and smooth tongue; but is better that it be in anger; for if it be rough and distempered, there it is an ill sign, but here it is an ill cause. Angry passion is a fire, and angry words are like breath to fan them together; they are like steel and flint, sending out fire by mutual collision.—*Jeremy Taylor*.

(b) Humanity has its weaker side, and when assailed by temptation and the force of evil, is liable to yield, and thus to be overcome. No degree of moral excellence or of spiritual attainment places us beyond the possibility of declension. Imperfection and error attach to us so long as we are in the flesh, and through the weakness and the waywardness of our nature, our highest joys may be marred and limited. If our will could be brought into perfect harmony with the will of God—if we were at all times to move and act in strict conformity with the Revelation of His infinite mind—if there were no contrariety between our inclination and His revealed intimations, deep, and full, and inexpressible would be our joy. It is when our will comes into opposition to His will—it is when we deviate and depart from that which He has prescribed, that our conduct becomes a source of disquietude; and the consciousness that we have preferred our own line of action to the Divinely-prescribed method not only introduces a great disturbing element into our nature, but robs us of purer joy and profounder peace.—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

Human nature has never been perfect in all its qualities, energies, and services; the perfection of human nature can be wrought out only by long-continued and severe probation. In choosing instruments for the representation of His will and the execution of His purposes, God has always chosen men who were best fitted on the whole for such ministry, though in some particulars they have disastrously and pitifully failed.

Consider, knowing human nature as we do, how beneficial a thing it was to the great men themselves to be shown now and again that they were imperfect, and that they were only great and strong as they were good, as they were true to God. To be an illustrious leader, to have power and authority amongst men, always to be in high places, and to be absolutely without a fault of disposition, temper, or desire, is enough to tempt any man to think

that he is more than a man: and even to be without actual social fault, that can be pointed out and blamed, is not unlikely to give a man a false notion of the real state of his own nature. We may learn quite as much from our failures as from our successes. I have seen more truly what I am by my faults than by my graces, and never have I prayed with so glowing a fervour as when I have seen that there is but a step between me and death and that I have nearly taken it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) Abraham, the great man and prophet of the Lord, shows his littleness by giving way to a cowardly fear that strangely divided his heart with the noblest faith found in the ancient world. His fear in one direction was simply ridiculous and pitiful; when he came amongst a powerful people he was always afraid that they would kill him in order to get possession of his wife. On the face of it the thing would seem to be incredible: here is a man who left his kindred and his father's house, who braved the hardships of the wilderness, who arose and pursued kings and slew them, and delivered the prey from the hand of the mighty, tottering like a weak old coward when he thinks that he may be killed. He made a mean figure before Pharaoh, and he makes a meaner still before Abimelech. In one sense I am glad that Abraham made such a fool of himself; for had he been without flaw or blemish, perfect and invincible in faith, and complete in the sanctification of his character, he would have awed me by his supernatural respectability, and I should never have thought of him as an example or a pattern.—*Ibid.*

(d) The punishment of sin is impartial. There is a form of self-deception common to us all, and especially in youth, by which we admit the general law, but try to shirk its personal, its individual, application. It is the old, old story of Eden over and over again in the case of every one of us—the serpent creeping up to us, all glitter and fascination—all dulcet whisper and sinuous lies, and saying to us, "See how fair the fruit is: how much to be desired! Be as God, knowing good and evil. Thou shalt not surely die." And so the boy and the youth—aye, and in his folly the grown man too, believes that it shall not be so with him; that he will repent; that he is the darling of Providence; that he is the favourite of heaven—he the one who shall sin and shall not suffer. If others handle pitch they shall be defiled. If others take fire into their bosom

they shall be burnt; but God will indulge him. And the very spirits of evil laugh at each one going as an ox to the slaughter, when they dupe him into the fancy that, out of special regard for him, that adamant chain of moral gravitation, more lasting and binding than that by which the stars are held in their spheres, will be snapped; that sin, for him only, will change its nature, and at his approach the Gehenna of punishment be transformed into a garden of delight. Is it so, my brethren? Has there ever been any human being yet, since time began, however noble, however beautiful, however gifted, however bright with genius or radiant with fascination, who has sinned with impunity? Ah, no! God is no respecter of persons. Fire burns and water drowns, whether the sufferer be a worthless villain or whether it be a fair and gentle child. And so the moral law works, whether the sin-

ner be a David or a Judas, whether he be a publican or a priest.—*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*

(e) A child would generally stand on its feet in a gust of wind if he knew it was coming; but when the wind happens to come round a corner furiously, he may be taken off his feet. Mind you are well ballasted by prayer every morning before your vessel puts out to sea, or carrying the quantity of sail you do, you may be blown out upon the waves to your perpetual shipwreck. Watch constantly against those things which are thought to be no temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow, and when Cleopatra would have an asp to poison herself, it was brought in a basket of fair flowers. Beware of arrows shot from a golden bow, or by a woman's hand. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

### SIN IN THE CHILD OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

The text gives us the reason why Moses and Aaron were kept from going into the land of Canaan, and it suggests to us some lessons about *Sin in the child of God*. God's people sin. Not a sinless character in the Bible, but Christ. No Perfectionism on earth taught there. Sin in the child of God is—

#### I. Very painful to God.

There is a tone of intense grief in the text. God hates sin in all; but most of all in His own children. Our own child falling into sin, and a mere acquaintance doing so—how differently we should feel in the one case from what we should in the other! Nothing hurts God more than sin in His own children.

#### II. Most inexcusable.

Speaking strictly, no sin can be excused. Sin is a crime, not a misfortune; so there can be no sufficient excuse for it. This is emphatically true of the child of God; he has a higher knowledge of duty; he has experienced the evil of sin, and felt its sting; he has a new principle—the Divine life within him struggling against sin; he has God to help him—a God who is ever accessible, &c. God speaks in the text as if Moses and Aaron had nothing whatever to palliate their conduct.

#### III. Most disastrous in its results.

God's name is dishonoured—brought into disrepute. The text shows that God entrusts His character to the keeping of His people. We have to sanctify Him before men; and in the proportion in which we sin we fail to do so. We are the world's Bible; they learn of God through us; they too often estimate Him from our life. No one can tell the injury which is done by inconsistent professors of religion! The weak stumble; the wicked are encouraged in their sins; the worldly have false impressions of God and His religion. It is an awful thing for a Christian to sin.

#### IV. Very certain of punishment.

"Be sure your sin will find you out:" this is true of the child of God. His sin will give him pain. None of us shall sin with impunity. Moses was the friend of God (Exod. xxxiii. 11), yet God could not pass by his sin. God's love to us does not blind Him to our faults. There is no weakness in Him towards His children, as there is often in us in our dealings with ours. He has ever visited His people for their sin; and sometimes, as in the text, though He may forgive, they have to suffer for the sin as long as they remain upon earth. The text tells us that sin is a hard and

bitter thing in the child of God. Let this incident—

1. *Make God's people more watchful.*
2. *Lead others to ponder their ways ;*  
for if God visits His own children for

sin, *a fortiori*, He will not let the wicked escape.

3. *Let none forget that God can forgive sin—all sin—through Jesus Christ.—*  
*David Lloyd.*

### A REASONABLE REQUEST AND AN UNGENEROUS REFUSAL

(Verses 14-21.)

We have in this paragraph—

#### I. A reasonable request.

"We are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: let us pass," &c. This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself.* They desired to enter Canaan from the east, crossing the Jordan; and their direct road to the east of the Jordan was through the land of Edom. If they are not permitted to travel by that way, they must take a very circuitous route (chap. xxi. 4). They asked simply for permission to travel "by the king's way," and promised neither to depart from that way into the fields or vineyards, nor to make use of the wells of water without payment for the same. Their request was—

2. *Urged by forcible reasons.* (1) By the relationship existing between them. "Thus saith thy brother Israel." The Israelites and the Edomites were descendants of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. The Israelites desire a renewal of the ancient kindnesses of their ancestors (Gen. xxxiii. 1-15). Brotherhood should promote kindness, increase mutual helpfulness, &c. (a) (2) By the sufferings which the Israelites had endured. "Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us: how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers." The sufferings they had borne at the hand of strangers should have induced their kinsfolk to succour and help them. (3) By the mercies which God had shown to Israel. "And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an Angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt," &c.

The blessings which God had bestowed upon them should have been viewed—

(i.) As an indication that it was His will that others should aid them. His will is binding, &c. (ii.) As an example to encourage others to aid them. (iii.) As an indication of His favour towards them, which suggested that it was to the interest of others to aid them. It is perilous to resist those whom God defends; it is prudent to further their designs, &c. (4) Because Israel would guarantee Edom against any loss. "We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells," &c. (verse 17). "We will go by the highway: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it," &c. (verse 19). To nomad chiefs, rich in flocks and herds, wells of water are a most precious and important property. Kalisch: "The possession of a well in arid regions not unfrequently causes strife and warfare between whole tribes, and the protection of his wells is a prominent object of solicitude to an Arab sheikh." (b) But the Israelites promise to respect these rights of property; and to cause the Edomites no loss or damage. Thus the arguments by which they enforce their request are conspicuously fair and reasonable.

#### II. An ungenerous refusal.

"And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. . . . And he said, Thou shalt not go through," &c. (vers. 20, 21). This refusal of the Edomites probably arose from—

1. *Fear that if they complied with the request of the Israelites the result might be injurious to them.* They did



not believe the promises made by the Israelites; and they feared "what so great an army once got in might do; they are not usually so easily removed." The fear was not unnatural, &c.

2. *Envy at the growing power of Israel.* The Edomites knew of their deliverance from Egypt; of their victory over the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8-13); of their immense number; and of their pretensions in respect to Canaan (Exod. xv. 14-17); and they were envious of their increasing strength.

3. *Remembrance of the ancient injury inflicted by Jacob upon Esau.* "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited." "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The nearer the relationship between the offender and the offended,

the wider is the breach and the more difficult is the reconciliation. The memory of an injury such as that which Jacob inflicted upon Esau it is perhaps impossible to wipe out; it is handed down from generation to generation, &c. The recollection of that injury imparted resoluteness and severity to the refusal of Edom to grant the request of Israel.

#### Conclusion.

1. *Learn that no alienation is so wide and bitter as that between brethren or other near relations.* (c)

2. *Where such alienation exists, let us seek to bring about reconciliation—a complete healing of the breach.* (d)

3. *Cultivate brotherly kindness.*

4. *Respect the rights of others even when the assertion of those rights is carried to an extreme.* "Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; wherefore Israel turned away from him."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Two days after the terrible battle of Chickamanga, I was passing over the battlefield. In a thick clump of bushes, on the side of a ravine, I saw a young man seated beside a tree with his arm bandaged. Seeing that his arm was badly wounded, I asked why he had not gone to the hospital in the rear. He replied, pointing to a corpse that lay near by, "That is my brother; and I am determined never to leave him until he is buried." I had the dead man buried, and the wounded brother taken care of.—*Memphis Advocate*, quoted in *Dict. of Illust.*

(b) The special necessity of a supply of water in a hot climate has always involved among the Eastern nations questions of property of the highest importance, and sometimes given rise to serious contention. To give a name to a well denoted a right of property, and to stop or destroy one once dug was a military expedient, a mark of conquest or an encroachment on territorial right claimed or existing in its neighbourhood. Thus the well Beersheba was opened, and its possession attested with special formality by Abraham (Gen. xxi. 30, 31). In the hope of expelling Isaac from their neighbourhood, the Philistines stopped up the wells which had been dug in Abraham's time and called by his name, an encroachment which was stoutly resisted by the followers of Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 15-33; see also 2 Kings iii. 19; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10). The Kurans notices abandoned wells as signs of desertion

(Sur. xxii.). To acquire wells which they had not themselves dug, was one of the marks of favour foretold to the Hebrews on their entrance into Canaan (Deut. vi. 11). To possess one is noticed as a mark of independence (Prov. v. 15), and to abstain from the use of wells belonging to others, a disclaimer of interference with their property (Num. xx. 17, 19; xxi. 22). Similar rights of possession, actual and hereditary, exist among the Arabs of the present day. Wells, Burckhardt says, in the interior of the desert, are exclusive property, either of a whole tribe, or of individuals whose ancestors dug the wells. If the well be the property of a tribe, the tents are pitched near it, whenever rain water becomes scarce in the desert; and no other Arabs are then permitted to water their camels. But if the well belongs to an individual, he receives presents from all strange tribes who pass or encamp at the well, and refresh their camels with the water of it. The property of such a well is never alienated; and the Arabs say that the possessor is sure to be fortunate, as all who drink of the water bestow on him their benedictions (comp. Num. xxi. 17, 18; Judg. i. 15).—*H. W. Phillott, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(c) We see by lamentable experience, that every toy and trifle maketh debate, not only between dearest friends, but between nearest kinsfolk, that they can never be reconciled. And as no band knitteth faster, and bindeth closer than this, while love and liking lasteth;

so no contention is so bitter, no hatred so deadly, as that of brethren and others that are near in blood, when the knot is broken and dissolved. The tender glass when it is once broken, will never be set together again. No water proveth so exceeding cold as that which was once heated exceeding hot; so no hatred proveth like to the hatred of brethren, which are often found merciless one toward another, and such as can never be appeased; as we see in the malice of Cain toward Abel. This it is that Solomon pointeth out in Prov. xviii. 19: "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and their contentions are as a bar of a castle." For as they loved most entirely and dearly before, so when once they grow enemies, they hate one another most extremely, whose hearts are as stony walls that cannot be pierced, and as bars of iron that cannot be broken. Now as the Prophet teacheth, that it is a "good and comely thing for brethren to dwell together in unity;" so it is a noisome and unnatural thing to behold greatest envy and most mortal malice, where the greatest and nearest bands of kindred should knit together.—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) A day of reconciliation! A family made one. Brethren coming together again after long separation. It is a beautiful picture. Why should it not be completed, when it needs completion, in our own day amongst ourselves? Ministers sometimes have misunderstandings, and say unkind things about one another, and exile one another from love and confidence for years. Is there never to be a day of reconciliation and Christian forgetfulness of wrong, even when positive wrong has been done? Families and households often get awry. The younger brother differs from his eldest bro-

ther; sisters fall out. One wants more than belongs to him; another is knocked to the wall because he is weak; and there comes into the heart bitterness and alienation; and often brothers and sisters never have a kind word to say about one another. Is it always to be so? Don't merely make it up, don't patch it up, don't cover it up; go right down to the base. You will never be made one, until you meet at the Cross, and hear Him say, "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." It is in Christ's sorrow that we are to forget our woes, in Christ's sacrifice that we find the answer to our sin, in Christ's union with the Father that we are to find all true and lasting reconciliation. But who is to begin? That is the wonderful question that is often asked us. Who is to begin? One would imagine that there were some very nice people about who only wanted somebody to tell them who was to begin. They want to be reconciled, only they don't know *who* is to begin. I can tell you. *You* are! That is exactly how it is. But I am the eldest,—yes, and *therefore* ought to begin. But I am the youngest. Then why should the youngest be an obstinate, pig-headed child? Who are you that you should not go and throw yourself down at your brother's feet and say, "I have done you wrong, pardon me"? Who is to begin? *You!* Which? *Both!* When? *Now!* Oh! beware of the morality which says, "I am looking for the opportunity, and if things should so get together—" Sir! death may be upon you before you get to the end of your long melancholy process of self-laudation and anti-Christian logic.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

## THE DEATH OF AARON.

(Verses 22-29.)

Let us notice—

### I. The death of Aaron.

Concerning the death of this distinguished man there are three things which we may profitably consider.

(a) He died—

1. *As a consequence of sin.* His death was not the result of disease, or of the exhaustion of the vitality of his body. It is true that he was an aged man; "Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in Mount Hor;" yet he died not by reason of old age and its infirmities; his death was not in the ordinary course of nature; but was a direct consequence of sin. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the

land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against My Word at the water of Meribah." He is distinctly called "the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16); yet now he must die because of his sin, without entering the Promised Land, without even beholding it. God is rigidly impartial in His dealings with His creatures. "There is no respect of persons with God." If His people sin, they must suffer for their sin.

2. *By the appointment of God.* There was nothing accidental in the death of Aaron; everything connected with it was arranged by the Lord. He determined the *time* of his death. "Is there not an appointed time to man

upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." "My times are in Thy hand." The Lord determined the place of his death. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; . . . and Aaron shall die there." The *circumstances* of his death were also arranged by the Lord. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments," &c. Nothing is left to accident, or chance, or human choice; all was Divinely appointed. Our Lord hath "the keys of Hades and of death." His people cannot die prematurely or accidentally. All who seek to live in harmony with His will, all who are moving in the line of His purposes, pass hence in accordance with His arrangements. (b)

3. The death of Aaron was his *introduction to life and to congenial society*. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." "Aaron, though he dies for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease and in honour. He is not 'cut off from his people,' as the expression usually is concerning those that die by the hand of Divine justice, but he is 'gathered to his people,' as one that died in the arms of Divine grace." The expression "gathered unto his people" suggests two ideas:—(1) Death is the way to life. The expression under consideration cannot be a mere poetical phrase for death; for in many places it is specified over and above the fact of death (see Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33; ver. 26; Deut. xxxii. 50). Nor can the expression relate to burial; for in this sense it would not be true of Aaron, nor yet of Abraham, to whom it was also applied, nor yet of Moses.

Besides which the fact of burial is in many places specified over and above the being "gathered unto his people" (see Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8, 9; xxxv. 29; 1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43, &c.). "The only assignable sense, therefore, is," as Dean Alford says, "that of reference to a state of further personal existence beyond death; and the expression thus forms a remarkable testimony to the Old Testament belief in a future state." When Aaron died he did not cease to be; but rather entered upon a larger, intenser, fuller life. When his lifeless body lay upon Mount Hor, his living spirit passed to the great assembly of the good in the presence of God. At death the body "returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." (2) Death is the way to congenial social life. "Gathered unto his people." Aaron at death passed neither into isolation nor into the uncongenial society of strangers or aliens; but to his own people, to persons of kindred sympathies and purposes and interests. After death men go to their own place, and to their own company. The good pass swiftly to their "Father's house," and to the great multitude who are gathered there. O, death is not terrible to the good! It is the way by which they pass to the holy and blessed fellowship of glorified saints, the way to our permanent and joyous home, the way to the presence of our God. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

II. The appointment of Aaron's successor.

"Strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. . . . And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." The sacred high-priestly vestments were taken off Aaron before his death, that they might not be defiled by contact with the dead. By putting them upon Eleazar, he was invested with the office to which they belonged. In this arrangement I discover—

1. *Kindness to Aaron*. It assured him—(1) That his office would be filled; that his work would be carried



on, &c. Interested in the religious welfare of the people as he was, this must have been cheering to him. (2) That this office would be filled by his own son; that the high-priesthood would continue in his own family. This must have been a gratification to the fatherly instincts of his nature.

2. *A guarantee of the continuance of the Church of God.* Aaron dies; but God has a successor at hand to take Aaron's place and to carry on his work. Moses dies leaving his great work incomplete, but Joshua, a brave and noble man, is ready to take up the great leader's enterprize, and carry it onward to a triumphant close. The whirlwind carries the faithful and heroic Prophet of Horeb, as on the wings of some swift and strong angel, to his well-earned rest; but Elisha, a worthy successor even of so distinguished a servant of the Lord, waits to catch the falling of his master's mantle and to prosecute his master's mission. And now, good and faithful ministers are gathered to their fathers; but the Lord Christ ever lives, and ever raises up worthy successors to fill the vacant places. The continuance of the Church depends not upon the services of even its most gifted and holy ministers, but upon its Divine Head. This is—(1) Humbling to our pride. God can carry on His work without our poor services. Our place will soon be filled by another, and perhaps better filled than it ever was by us. (2) Encouraging to our faith. The work so dear to us will be carried on when we have passed away. Though the human workers die, the Divine Master and Supreme Worker ever lives, and ever carries forward His cause towards its final triumph.

### III. The mourning because of Aaron's death.

"And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." This national mourning suggests—

1. *The worth of faithful ministers.* Aaron had rendered valuable services to the Israelites; he had rendered essen-

tial service in the work of their emancipation from Egyptian bondage; he had entreated God again and again for them in their rebellions; he had stood between the more than fourteen thousand dead, and the living, and by his intercession stayed the progress of the dreadful plague. But now he has gone: he will serve them no more. Well may they weep. The loss of faithful ministers is one of the greatest losses that can befall society. They render the most valuable services, they exercise the most salutary and inspiring influence in society. (d)

2. *The appreciation of blessings when they are withdrawn from us, which were not valued when they were ours.* While Aaron was with them the Israelites "were often murmuring against him, threatening indeed to kill him, wishing that there was an end of him, speaking against him, and in every way discouraging him in his work. But when he was dead they mourned for him; they found their loss when it was too late to value him. This is but an example of human nature. We very seldom value our chiefest blessings until we are made to feel their worth by the loss of them. It has often happened in the case of the Christian minister and congregation, that he has been undervalued while he was testifying God's truth, and has been much mourned for when taken away." (Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33).

"Like birds whose beauties languish, half-conceal'd  
Till mounted on the wing, their glossy  
plumes  
Expanded, shine with azure, green, and  
gold;  
How blessings brighten as they take their  
flight!"—Young.

Shakspeare also gives luminous expression to this truth:—

"It so falls out,  
That what we have we prize not to the worth,  
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,  
Why then we rack the value; then we find  
The virtue that possession would not show us  
Whiles it was ours."

Let us appreciate the gifts of Heaven while we have them, &c.

In conclusion, learn—

1. *The universality of death.* The

gifted, the great, the beautiful, the holy, all die. We must die. Let us live that death shall be to us great gain. (e)

## 2. The imperfection of the Aaronic

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Behold then the three persons, Aaron, Moses, and Eleazar, going up the mountain. The first is distinguished by his priestly habit. He is clad in the mitre, the ephod, the fine linen, the Urim and the Thummim, and those bells, which formerly when heard within the holy of holies told of his life, now seem sounding the signal for Death to meet him on the summit, and their tinkle lessening up the mountain strikes like a death-watch in the ear of the people of the great congregation assembled before their tents to trace the progress and to witness the event, not a murmur or groan heard throughout them all, but millions, it may be, weeping in silence. See with what calm, majestic, uninterrupted and un-reverted steps the three pursue their journey, talking perhaps of that Promised Land which one of them is never to see, which another is to see from a mountain in Moab, and which the third only is to enter, or talking of that Better Country to which the first is so near. Mark the eager look cast forward by Aaron toward the top of the hill, as if he expected the Angel of Death to be waiting for him there; but when he gains the summit, lo! all is empty and sternly silent, the victim is there but no wood and no fire for the offering; one mighty sacrificer has arrived, but the other is not yet come to keep the dread engagement. Turn then ere he comes, and see from the mount ten thousand times ten thousand torn, ruptured, rent, serrated and savage hills standing up as witnesses to the covenanted meeting and catastrophe at hand; not a blade of grass or drop of water in view, nothing but a bare and blasted wilderness of sand and stone, and thunder-split crag, as if a flood of fire had crossed, and torn, and tortured it into the similitude of hell; including the vast valley of Arabah which unites the Red and the Dead Seas, both of which are visible, and on its western side the great sandy desert, surmounted in the extreme distance by the Sinaitic range. Mark the last glance cast by Aaron to the camp and the multitude far below, a glance speaking of sorrow and of remorse too. since it is owing to his sin at Meribah that he is dying so soon, and dying so publicly, but speaking still more of submission, confidence, and hope in the mercy of God. See the slow and solemn manner in which the hand of Moses, although the younger brother, tenderly, like a mother her babe at eventide, strips Aaron of his garments. And behold now the high priest clothed only with his long grey hair, as is that ardent sun over-head with his old beams, laying himself down

priesthood (see Heb. vii. 11, 18, 19, 23, 28; viii. 7; ix. 25; x. 1-4, 11).

3. *The perfection of the Priesthood of Christ* (see Heb. vii. 22-28; viii. 6; ix. 23-28; x. 10-14).

upon the hill, watching with an eye of love and pride his son Eleazar, as Moses arrays him with ephod, and linen, and breast-plate, and mitre; and as the bright rays from the Urim and Thummim flash for the last time upon his dim and dying eye, blessing his noble son whose ornament they are henceforward to be, and blessing the brother with whom he has so long held sweet counsel and united in marvellous achievement; and then fixing his look upward as if waiting for the advent and the dart of his adversary, who comes not; but instead there is heard a "still, small voice," saying, "Come up hither," and lo! a dead body lies on the granite of Mount Hor, and a living soul, suddenly clothed by the hands of angels with robes that shall never be stripped away, has joined the great assembly in the heavens.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) We strive, oftentimes almost unconsciously perhaps, to re-arrange or re-ordain particular circumstances, and even whole scenes in our life and in the lives of others. And with a still more importunate and sorrowful eagerness do we seek to have some power in arranging for life's close. We would not dare to take the key of death in our own hand, but we would touch it while it lies in His. *Not now, or not there, or not thus, we are always saying.*

"NOT NOW," we say, when the father is called to leave the family of which he is the whole stay. "Let him live, let a few weeks elapse, let his family be provided for, let his work be done!" It is done, is the answer, His fatherless children are provided for; I have taught him to leave them with Me. "The Father of the fatherless, the Husband of the widow, is God in His holy habitation."

"Not now," we say, when the mother has heard the home-call, and with a calmness and courage greater than those of the soldier in battle, is rising above all her cares, and becoming a child again, at the threshold of the heavenly home. "Oh, not now! Who will check the waywardness, encourage the virtues, receive the confidences, soothe the little sorrows, and train the loves of those infant hearts? Who will teach the evening prayer, and listen to the Sabbath hymn? Who can give a mother's care, and feel a mother's love?" "I," saith the Shepherd, "I will gather the lambs with mine arm, and carry them in My bosom. I will forget no prayer of the dying mother's heart. I will treasure in My heart the yearnings of her life over her children, and the unutterable compassions of her dying hour; and when many years have



sped, and she has been long in heaven, these children will remember her in their holiest and happiest moments, and by their walk and their work will be proving that she did not live in vain, that she 'finished the work that was given her to do.'

Or, we say, "*Not there, oh, not there!* away on the sea—a thousand miles from land—let him not die there, and be dropped into the unfathomed grave, where the unstable waves must be his only monument, and the winds the sole mourners of the place! Or not in some distant city or far-off land—strangers around his bed, strangers closing his eyes, and then carrying him to a stranger's grave. Let him come home and die amid the whisperings and breathings of the old unquenchable love." "He is going home," is the answer, "and going by the best and only way. I can open the gate Beautiful in any part of the earth or sea. I can set up the mystic ladder, the top of which reaches to heaven, in the loneliest island, at the furthest ends of the earth, and your friends will flee to the shelter of *My* presence all the more fully because yours is far away."

Or, we say, "*Not thus*, not through such agonies of body, or faintings of spirit, or tremblings of faith—not in unconsciousness—not without dying testimonies. Let there be outward as well as inward peace. Let mention be made of Thy goodness. Let there be foretellings and foreshadowings of the glory to which, as we trust, they are going. Oh, shed down the light, the fragrance of heaven upon their dying bed!" The answer is, "They are there, and you are so dull of sense that you perceive them not. Your friend is filled with the 'peace that passeth understanding,' and safe in the everlasting arms."

Thus, brethren, the *time*, and the *place*, and the *circumstances*, are all arranged by the wisdom and the will of Him who holds the keys, and we could not, even if we had our own will and way, make anything better than it is in the perfect plan. Better! everything would be worse—inconceivably worse if we had the keys. Let us trust them, with a loyal loving trust, with Him who graciously says to us, "Fear not;" One who, in this as in all other things, will treat us and give us according to our faith.—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) Death is but a going home. A child is away at school, and the vacation is near at hand; and you may be sure that the father and mother long to see the child more than the child wants to see father and mother. So, according to the good old custom, the father takes the carriage, and wends his way to the school, perhaps with, perhaps without, intimations to the child of his coming. In the midst of his tasks on the last day, the child is suddenly greeted by the voice and presence of his father; and no sooner are the first salutations exchanged than the father says, "Are your things ready? We go to-morrow." Wine is not so sparkling as the joy in the child's heart. He can neither eat,

nor sleep, nor play. The thought that his father has come, and that he is going home to see his mother, and brothers, and sisters, has quite intoxicated him. By such glorious images as this God is pleased to represent our departure from the present life. The Lord Jesus Christ shall come to our poor old weather-beaten school-house in this world, and say to us, "Come home! you are wanted."

Heaven is not, then, a great bleak shore to which you are driven by the storm, and where you are cast among savage inhabitants. Heaven is a blessed place of rest. It is your home. You have friends there, the chiefest among whom is He that loved you, that gave Himself for you, that has ever watched over you during your earthly pilgrimage, and that soon, very soon, will come for you, as already He has for yours. They are glorious there; and in all their glory, if they could but speak a word to us, would it be such a poor stumbling word as that which they spoke in the hour of death? If they could speak to us from the eternal world, what hope and consolation would they give us!—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Death is, in every case, an event of most momentous consequences. . . . But the death of a minister of the Gospel, in addition to the consequences which affect his own destiny, involves others which extend to his flock. If he has been faithful unto death, his decease is in mercy to himself, but it must at the same time be in judgment to his church. The testimony of a witness for God to an unbelieving generation is finished—a herald of salvation is withdrawn—an ambassador of Christ is recalled—a light of the world, which has guided many, and might have guided more, into the haven of eternal peace, is extinguished. It is not the death of a friend merely, however valued, or a relative, however dear, whose affection soothed the sorrows of time, and softened the rugged path of life; but it is the removal of one whose solicitude watched for the soul, promoted its salvation, and diffused, or aimed to diffuse, a beneficial influence over its eternal existence. What arithmetic can estimate the greatness of such a calamity? Instead of that living voice which, both by the eloquence of preaching, and the still holier and more elevating eloquence of prayer, often lifted the rapt hearers to heaven, and matured them for its glories, they have nothing now but the cold and silent marble, which perpetuates, with his honoured name, their own incalculable loss.—*J. Angell James.*

(e) All must die. The fact is so old and every day, that, like the sun, few people think of it or look at it. It is otherwise, indeed, with those who see the solemn reality approaching themselves, and who then, for the first time, feel its strangeness, its importance, its awfulness, and how little prepared they are for it. They resemble one who has fallen asleep on a railway, and, starting up, sees the engine just upon him, and has hardly time,



by one wild cry, to commend himself to the mercy of God, ere he is crushed into non-existence. Something like this was the cry of Hoffman, the German writer, who, when after a thoughtless career he felt himself approaching his end, and was told to prepare for death, turned his face away and said, "*And must I at last begin to think about God?*" Truly says his biographer, "Sorrowfuller words were never spoken by man." Far from

us be it to say that these cries are never answered—we believe that, when sincere, they always are. But, alas! how foolish to delay their utterance! how foolish to expect that there shall always be time given to utter them! and how much wiser to close with Christ's offer of mercy now, and now, ere it be too late, to begin to think seriously, lovingly, prayerfully, and hopefully of God!—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

## THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT.

(Verses 23-29.)

### I. The common destiny of man.

"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." At death the body is gathered to the generations that are gone. One generation is buried in the dust of another, and future generations will be entombed in our dust. When one thinks of this, how worthless appear all the mere secular distinctions of this world! There are "kings and counsellors of the earth," &c. (Job. iii. 14, 15, 19). Thither you and I are going. But not as to a final resting place. This Bible assures me that all that ever have left us are living now—thinking, active, conscious; and that the good who are living are living in the conscious presence of Infinite Love—in the heaven of the blest. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13).

### II. The rigorousness of moral law.

Aaron was to die. Why? Because of a certain something which took place at Meribah, Moses and Aaron were both excluded from the Promised Land. The law demands punishment for sin even in a good man. Moral law seems to be as immutable as God Himself. Aaron went up into Mount Hor, and there he died. And his death proclaims in thunder the fact that however distinguished a man may be for his excellencies, however high he may be in the Church of God, his sin shall not go unpunished.

### III. The termination of life in the midst of labour.

The work entrusted to Moses and Aaron was to conduct the children of Israel through the wilderness into the

Promised Land; and this work was unfinished. We nearly all die with our work unfinished. The farmer dies when he has only half ploughed his field; the merchant dies, &c. We are not surprised when an old tree, though prolific in its day, dies, for it dies by the law of decay; nor are we astonished that an unfruitful tree should be cut down, for it is a cumberer of the ground; but we are astonished that a tree, with its branches full of sap, with its boughs laden with fruit, with thousands reposing under its shadow, should be struck with a thunderbolt from heaven. "Thy path," O God, "is in the great waters," &c.

### IV. God's agency in man's dissolution.

Why did Aaron die? He was not worn out with age. Not because there was disease rankling in his system; not because there was any external violence applied to him. Why, then, did he die? The Great One determines that he shall die, and he dies. This is always the philosophy of a man's death. Philosophy, the Bible, and reason all say, "man dies because the Great One has determined that he should die." If God has determined that the frailest organisation shall live for ever, that organisation will live for ever; and so also, if He determines it, the most robust, the strong and vigorous, dies in a moment (see Job vii. 1; xiv. 5, 20; Psa. xc. 3; Job i. 21).

### V. The promptitude with which Providence supplies the places of the dead.

Aaron must die, but there is Eleazar standing by his side ready to step into

his place. This is the order of Providence. A merchant dies, and another man stands by his side ready to carry on his business. A lawyer dies, &c. A statesman dies, &c. A minister leaves a pulpit, his voice becomes silent in death, and the people mourn; but God has another minister standing by ready to step into the place of the departed, and to carry on his work. Oh, how this encourages my faith in the progress of Divine truth in this world! . . .

But it is certainly humbling to our pride. My friend, the world can do without thee. Thou art but a blade in the field; the landscape will bloom without thee.

#### VI. The trial of human friendships.

Moses and Eleazar were very closely related to Aaron. Moses was more than a brother to Aaron. There was a spiritual kindredship between them. There were mental affinities and spiritual affections. They were devoted to the same great purpose, they had the same plan, they were the children of the same God; and here is their trial—Aaron must die. . . .

Can it be that the great God of love, who has made us to love, and who has disposed us to give our affections to certain persons, should, by our love, make us so often wretched? There is to be a renewal of real spiritual friendship. The separation which takes place in the death of true Christian friends is more in form than in reality. In truth we become more really friends by the death separation. Death cannot destroy our loving memories of them. Death does not kill—nay, it seems but to intensify

our affection. We are one—for ever one.

#### VII. The painful recognition by society of its greatest losses.

The people "mourned for Aaron thirty days."

The two greatest blessings on this earth are—the Bible and good men. I need not tell you the value of the Bible, for you know it. Glorious Book for the intellect, for the imagination, for the heart, for the world, for all ages! Blessed be God for the Bible! But next to the Bible, we value good men. Good men are as fountains welling up in the desert through which you are passing; they are lights in abounding darkness; they are salt which counteracts our tendency to corruption. But the Christian minister is the best of all men, and his loss is the greatest of all losses. A man who not only has the spirit of the Bible in him, but who has given his intellect, his genius, his powers of mind to the study of the Word of God, in order to present that Word to all classes of men, dealing out a word in season to each—a word of advice to the enquiring, of counsel to the thoughtless, of caution to the young, of comfort and help to the poor and suffering—I know of no man who is rendering such a service to society and to humanity as he. Such a man was Aaron. He was more; he was an orator. God says, "My servant Aaron can speak well." But he dies. His eloquent tongue is silent in death; and they wept thirty days.—*David Thomas, D.D. Abridged from "The Christian World," March 28th, 1861.*

### THE REMOVAL OF A DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD.

(Verses 25-29.)

In this death there were—

#### I. The express appointment and arrangement of God.

The departure of God's servants is never accidental or unforeseen.

#### II. The last attentions and ministrations of pious friendship.

Such ministrations and attentions are a privilege to—

#### 1. Those about to depart.

#### 2. Those who for a season are to survive.

#### III. The tokens of Divine favour.

In one respect Aaron's death was a sign of Divine displeasure, but this displeasure was only partial. He was allowed to go to the place of his death in his robes of office.

**III. The pledge of perpetuity to the Divine cause.**

A successor was immediately, authoritatively, and unquestionably secured to the office that Aaron held.

**V. The prospect of immortal happiness.**

Mount Hor was near enough to permit a vision of Canaan.—*J. Parsons.*  
From "*The Biblical Museum.*"

# THE SORROWS OF BEREAVEMENT.

(Verse 29.)

What an impressive scene is this! a whole nation bowed down by one common grief. The many thousands of Israel are mourning the death of one of the most noble and useful of men.

We too shall soon "be gathered unto our people." Like waves which chase each other to the shore, or like clouds which on the heels of each other fast travel o'er the face of the blue heavens, are we treading in the wake of "the great departed," and soon shall arrive at the solemn bourne of our pilgrimage.

"Time is fleeting,

And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave."

—*Longfellow.*

The tears of this vast congregation are sadly suggestive. Let us look into the reasons of the mourning of this nation.

**I. A great and good man had been removed from their midst.**

"Aaron was dead."

1. He was *a holy man*. The lustre of his life is clouded by a few imperfections and sins; but he was unquestionably a good man. "Aaron, the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16).

2. He was *an eloquent man*. "Aaron the Levite—I know that he can speak well" (Exod. iv. 14). This great gift he had used in the highest service. It had been employed in obtaining the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage; in speaking unto them words of reproof, counsel, instruction, and exhortation; and in speaking unto God on their behalf.

3. He filled a position of the highest honour and of the greatest importance.

Under God he was the religious head of this nation. To him was granted to approach nearer to the Most High than any man of that age, except Moses. More than once his intercessions had averted the Divine anger from the guilty people. But at the summons of God he has left them for ever. "Aaron was dead." (a)

**II. A great and good man had been removed while toiling for their welfare.**

Aaron was not a useless member of this great congregation; he had not become unfit for service; he was fulfilling the important functions of his sacred office. Yet God called him away, and his "purposes were broken off." And still men are called away by God in the midst of service and usefulness. The statesman, the minister, the author, the physician, the parent, are sometimes thus summoned hence. To us there is much mystery in this. We cannot explain it; but we can reverently bow before it. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." (b)

**III. A great and good man had been removed when apparently his services could hardly be spared.**

To our poor mind it seems that Israel could not afford to lose Aaron. We think that they needed his experience to counsel them, his faith to plead with God for them, his brave spirit to encourage them and to assist in leading them to the Promised Land. But God is independent of even the most distinguished and useful men. When such men are removed, here is our encouragement—God ever lives and works; Christ



ever lives and works ; and "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." (c)

IV. A great and good man had been removed, and in his removal many had parted with a true and loving friend.

In that sorrowing nation, I have no doubt, there were not a few who had found in Aaron a kindred spirit, and rejoiced in the friendship of his affectionate heart. And more than this, Moses was his brother, and Eleazar and Ithamar were his sons. But the brother, the sons, the friends of Aaron, must all take their leave of him for ever in this world. The death of a true friend is one of the sorest sorrows that our hearts are called upon to suffer; and wrings from us the bitterest tears.

Conclusion.

1. *Prize the friends and the great and*

*good men whom God sends amongst us while they are yet with us.* Israel did not feel the worth of Aaron until he was taken from them. Let us avoid their error, &c.

2. *Be thankful for Christianity.* It takes the sting and the bitterness from death. It reveals a blessed immortality, and bestows the title to it. (d)

3. *Remember that we too must pass away from this world.* "It is appointed unto men once to die." "Here have we no continuing city."

4. *Live as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* Our home is not here; our rest is not here. "Our citizenship is in heaven." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. (Matt. vi. 19-21). "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." So death will be great gain.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The world can have no greater or richer boon conferred on it than the gift of a great man. The history of the world is but the history of its great men. God carries on society by such. They are the hinges on which it has turned. They measure whole ages for themselves. They are the mountain summits in the great path of human progress—the most towering landmarks of the past, and the hopes of the future. Such, too, are the princes in Israel—great men who are not the property of a denomination but of the Church, with a breadth and richness of intellect, with a nobleness of character, and a devotion to great principles that cannot be confined to the range of one sect, whose movements stir the whole Church of God, and whose departure leaves a mighty gap. We admire and honour such men wherever we find them. We thank God for every great, noble-hearted, and honest servant of Christ. In proportion as the service rendered by such persons is real and valuable, do we learn to think highly of them, to depend on them, and to feel as if we knew not how their loss is to be supplied.—*John Riddell.*

(b) If we believe in God, in a God of order and wisdom, and especially if we believe in Jesus, the infinite support of our life, we dare not doubt for one moment, that when a great or good man dies, his whole appointed work on earth was done, that Providence had no more for him to do, that all he had to do for the world, or for his family, was completed and summed up. Now a worthy and beloved parent does not cease his influence when he dies; he rules

his children still, in many cases with mightier power than by his living voice. Well may we feel that he has left such memories and impressions of his views and principles written on their hearts, and now hallowed to perpetual remembrance by the sanctifying power of death, that he, though dead, shall guide them by their very relation to him. Their very love to him indeed must make them mourn; but still, no loss is irreparable; no human loss is absolute.—*Ibid.*

(c) Let all this carry up our love, and trust, and loyalty, to Jesus alone. It is the visible mark of inferiority of all others, *that they die.* However great, they are limited in their greatness. They have had but a certain work to do, a limited power to put forth. They could not serve the continuous wants of the world—they do their little work or their great work, and then they are removed. Their longer continuance might turn out a hindrance. It is the unapproachable distinction of Jesus, that He remains for ever the Prince of Peace, the grand Head of the nation, to whom all earthly princes are subject. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Over him death hath no power; the taint of corruption cannot infect Him. No voice shall bewail His failure, no nation weep His funeral, no cry of a pierced world tell that its hope and star is gone. He liveth and reigneth for ever. He is our refuge still in times of trouble. Friends die and great men disappear from the stage; but the Saviour remains with sympathy to dry up all our tears, with power to sustain under the loss of earthly supports. As the hearts we cling

to become still, then He opens all His heart to us, and in contact with it our own heart grows still and calm, and learns that, in taking from us the earthly prop, He was but drawing us nearer Himself.—*Ibid.*

(d) Life and immortality have been brought clearly to light in the Gospel—in Him who hath Himself risen “the firstfruits of them that sleep.” And hence the Christian alone looks with cheerful hopefulness in death. Others may face it with steadfastness or calm—he alone lies down to sleep in hope. Not only without fear, but in joy he enters the dark valley, and friends lay him in the narrow prison-house, “dust to dust, in the hope of a joyful resurrection.” “For this corruptible must put on incorruption,” &c. (1 Cor. xv. 53-57).

It is this fact of Resurrection which leads the apostle to say that we who remain alive should not sorrow for our dead ones, “even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13). Why, indeed, should we thus sorrow, who believe that as “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him?” They who had no such faith, might well weep as they buried their Dead out of sight, and knew not whether they should evermore see the light of life. But why should we hopelessly weep for those who are resting with the Lord—who have gone before to be for ever with Him? Why, indeed, but for the faintness of our hearts and the weakness of our flesh? Let us sorrow

rather for ourselves, that our sight is so dim and our faith so dull—that we are so little able to look beyond things which are “seen and temporal” to those which are “unseen and eternal.” The Living, rather than the Dead, may have a claim upon our sorrowful regard. For the Dead have gone beyond our anxiety. They have entered into their rest. They are asleep in Jesus; while the Living, who are around us, and with us, may be wandering far from Him, may be wounding Him by their sins, may be “crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame.” It is as if we were to weep for the child resting in its father’s bosom, sheltered in a happy home, rather than for the child who has gone astray in darkness, and cannot find its homeward way. It is as if we were to sorrow for the mariner who has found a safe harbour, and rests in peace, rather than for the storm-tossed sailor in the open main, around whom the billows may be heaving high, and over whom the sky may be darkening to his doom. No, brethren, let us not sorrow for those who are with God, safe in a Father’s house, sheltered in the haven of eternal rest. But let us be anxious and careful for the living, that we may help them, and guide them by God’s blessing in a right way; and for ourselves, that we may “know the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes.”—*Principal Tulloch, D.D.*

## CHAPTER XXI

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *King Arad the Canaanite.* Rather, “the Canaanite King of Arad.” Arad was a royal city of the Canaanites (Josh. xii. 14), and was situated on a hill called *Tell Arad*, twenty Roman miles south of Hebron. Of the city nothing remains save some ruins.

*Which dwelt in the south.* Heb. “in the Negeb.” See on chap. xiii. 17.

*By the way of the spies.* הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלְלוּכִים, an expression of uncertain meaning. Fuerst says that *Atharim* is the plural of *Athar*, a place, district; and is the “proper name of a place in the south of Palestine.” So also the LXX., A. Clarke, Horsley, Patrick. “But the *Chaldee*, *Samar*, and *Syr.* render it with much greater probability as an appellative noun formed from *תָּרַח* with *N prosthet.*, and synonymous with

הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלְלוּכִים, the spies (chap. xiv. 6). The way of the spies was the way through the desert of Zin, which the Israelitish spies had previously taken to Canaan (chap. xiii. 21). The territory of the King of Arad extended to the southern frontier of Canaan, to the desert of Zin, through which the Israelites went from Kadesh to Mount Hor.”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Hormah.* Margin: “utter destruction” (see on chap. xiv. 45). “The seeming inconsistency between Num. xxi. 3, and Judg. i. 17, may be relieved by supposing that the vow made at the former period was fulfilled at the latter, and the name (the root of which הָרַם constantly occurs in the sense of, to devote to destruction, or utterly to destroy) given by anticipa-

tion."—*Dr. H. Hayman, in Bible Dict.* The Canaanites seem to have resumed possession after the departure of the Israelites, and to have restored the ancient name. It was not until the time of the Judges that the vow, which Moses and the Israelites made at this time, was completely executed.

Verse 4. *And they journeyed from Mount Hor, &c.* The Edomites having refused them a passage through their land, they were compelled to turn their steps towards the Red Sea, and go round the land of Edom. Their way was down the Arabah until they drew near to Akabah (Ezion-Geber, Deut. ii. 8), then "they turned up one of the Wadys on the left, and so made their way by the back of the mountain of Seir to the land of Moab on the east of the Dead Sea."

*The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.* Travelling in the Arabah was likely to produce discouragement. Mr. Grove thus writes of it: "The surface is dreary and desolate in the extreme. 'A more frightful desert,' says Dr. Robinson, 'it had hardly been our lot to behold . . . loose gravel and stones everywhere furrowed with the beds of torrents . . . blocks of porphyry brought down by the torrents among which the camels picked their way with great difficulty . . . a lone shrub of the ghûdah the almost only trace of vegetation.' This was at the ascent from the *Wady el-Jeib* to the floor of the great valley itself. Further south, near Ain el-Weibeh, it is a rolling gravelly desert with round naked hills of considerable elevation. At Wady Ghurundel it is 'an expanse of shifting sands, broken by innumerable undulations and low hills,' and 'countersected by a hundred water-courses' . . . Nor is the heat less terrible than the desolation, and all travellers, almost without exception, bear testimony to the difficulties of journeying in a region where the sirocco appears to blow almost without intermission."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 5. *This light bread; i.e., the*

manna. According to Fuerst, the adjective in the Heb. when applied to food, conveys the idea of *contemptible, starving*.

Verse 6. *Fiery serpents.* Heb., lit., burning snakes. The adjective does not point to the bright colour of the snakes, but to the inflammatory effect of their bite. Venomous reptiles of various kinds abound in the neighbourhood (comp. Deut. viii. 15). The burning snake must not be identified with the "fiery flying serpent" of Isa. xiv. 29; xxx. 6.

Verse 8. *Make thee a fiery serpent; i.e., a serpent of a similar appearance to those which had bitten the people.* This similarity of aspect was an essential element of the symbolism.

*Upon a pole.* Heb., a standard or ensign.

Verse 10. *Oboth.* In chap. xxxii., 41-43, two other stations are mentioned in this part of their journey before Oboth. From Hor they went to Zalmonah, from Zalmonah to Punon, and from Punon to Oboth. The exact site of those places is not very certain. Zalmonah was probably in the Wâdy Ithm, "a low gap in the hills, which turns the eastern range of the Arabah, and through which the Israelites must have passed on their way to Moab. It is still one of the regular roads to Petra, and in ancient times seems to have been the main approach from Elath or Akaba, as it is the only road from the south which enters Petra through the Sik."—*Stanley. Sin. and Pal.* Entering the Wâdy Ithm, "the route of the Israelites took a sharp turn, and ran thenceforward in a north-easterly direction." Punon or Phinon, according to Eusebius and Jerome, "was situated between Petra and Zoar." This locality suits the requirements of the history. "Oboth was north of Punon, east of the northern part of Edom, and is pretty certainly the same as the present pilgrim halting-place el-Ahsa."—*Speaker's Comm.* But really the exact site cannot be determined.

Verse 11. *Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, &c.* Margin: "Heaps of Abarim." The name is



generally interpreted as signifying, "the heaps, or ruins, of the further regions." Keil and Del.: "ruins of the crossings over." "Ije-abarim," says Mr. Grove, "was on the S.E. boundary of the territory of Moab; not on the pasture-downs of the Mishor, the modern *Belka*, but in the *midbar*, the waste uncultivated 'wilderness' on its skirts. No identification of its situation has been attempted, nor has the name been found lingering in the locality, which, however, has yet to be explored. If there is any connexion between the Ije-Abarim and the Har-Abarim, the mountain-range opposite Jericho, then Abarim is doubtless a general appellation for the whole of the highland east of the Dead Sea."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 12. *Valley of Zared*. More correctly: "the brook of Zered." Dr. Hayman says, this is "a brook or valley running into the Dead Sea near its S.E. corner, which Dr. Robinson with some probability suggests as identical with the *Wady el Ahsy*. It lay between Moab and Edom, and is the limit of the proper term of the Israelites' wandering (Deut. ii. 14)."—*Bibl. Dict.* Keil and Del., however, suggest that "the Wady el Ahsy must already have been crossed when they came to the border of Moab (verse 11). In all probability it was the Wady *Kerek*, in the upper part of its course, not far from Katrane, on the pilgrim road."

Verse 13. *The other side of Arnon, &c.* Arnon, the present *Wady el Mojeb*, is a torrent which rises in the mountains of Arabia, flows through the wilderness, and falls into the Dead Sea. It "formed the boundary between Moab and the Amorites, on the north of Moab, and afterwards between Moab and Israel (Reuben). From Judges xi. 18, it would seem to have been also the east border of Moab."—*Bibl. Dict.* The Israelites could not have crossed the *Mojeb* itself—"so dreadfully wild and so deep a valley." The encampment of Israel must have been in the upper part of the Arnon and on its south side; apparently opposite to Kede-

moth (Deut. ii. 24, 26); and here they effected their passage across.

Verse 14. *The book of the wars of Jehovah*. "This was probably," says Dean Perowne, "a collection of ballads and songs composed on different occasions by the watch-fires of the camp, and for the most part, though not perhaps exclusively, in commemoration of the victories of the Israelites over their enemies. The title shows us that these were written by men imbued with a deep sense of religion, and who were therefore foremost to acknowledge that not their own prowess, but Jehovah's Right Hand, had given them the victory when they went forth to battle. Hence it was called, not 'The Book of the Wars of Israel,' but 'The Book of the Wars of Jehovah.' Possibly this is the book referred to in Exod. xvii. 14, especially as we read (ver. 16), that when Moses built the altar which he called Jehovah-Nissi (Jehovah is my banner), he exclaimed 'Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' This expression may have given the name to the book.

"The fragment quoted from this collection is difficult, because the allusions in it are obscure . . . . 'Wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of Jehovah,

"Vaheb in Suphah and the torrent-beds;  
Arnon and the slope of the torrent-beds  
Which turneth to where Ar lieth,  
And which leaneth upon the border of  
Moab."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 15. *The dwelling of Ar, &c.* "Ar was on the bank of the Arnon, lower down the stream than where the Israelites crossed. And near the spot where the upper Arnon (Seil Saideh) receives the tributary Nahaliel (ver. 19), there rises, in the midst of the meadow-land between the two torrents, a hill covered with what are doubtless the ruins of the ancient city. A neighbouring aqueduct testifies to its former importance. The peculiarity of the site points to it as 'the city that is in the midst of the river' (Josh. xiii. 9, 16; cf. Deut. ii. 36). It had been,

perhaps, heretofore the chief city of the Moabites; it now marked the limit of their territory; and it was hither accordingly that the king of Moab went to welcome Balaam (xxii. 36). It was respected by the Israelites (Deut. ii. 9, 29), as being still a frontier city of Moab, although it lay on the northern bank of what was elsewhere the boundary stream; but it had not escaped the ravages of the Amorites in the recent war (ver. 28).—*Speaker's Comm.*

This Ar is not to be identified with Rabbath-Moab, which is still called Rabbah, in the midst of the land of Moab, about midway between *Kerek* and *Wady Mojeb*.

Verse 16. *Beer*; i.e., a well; and is probably the same as Beer-elim, the "well of heroes" (Isa. xv. 8).

Verses 17, 18. *Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, &c.* Perowne translates:

"Spring up, O well! sing ye to it:  
Well, which the princes dug,  
Which the nobles of the people bored  
With the sceptre-of-office, with their staves."

*Mattanah*, the name of the next halting-place, signifies a gift. The site has not been identified with certainty.

Verse 19. *Nahaliel*; i.e., "torrent of God." Probably corresponded with the *Wady Encheileh*, "which runs into the *Mojeb*, the ancient Arnon, a short distance to the east of the place at which the road between Rabbah and Aroer crosses the ravine of the latter river." The name *Encheileh* is the same as *Nahaliel* with a slight alteration in its form.

*Bamoth* is a shorter form of *Bamoth-Baal*, i.e., the high places of Baal (chap. xxii. 41; Josh. xiii. 17). In the next verse it is spoken of as "Bamoth in the ravine." According to Josh. xiii. 17 it was near to Dibon-Gad and Beth-Baal-Meon.

Verse 20. *The country of Moab*. The margin is more correct, "the field of Moab." The expression in this place denotes a portion of the tableland having Rabbath-Ammon on the

north, and the Arnon on the south. It corresponds with "all the plain from *Medeba* to *Dibon* . . . and all the plain by *Medeba*" (Josh. xiii. 9, 16).

*The top of Pisgah*. Margin: Or "the hill." Heb.: "The top, or head, of the *Pisgah*." "'The *Pisgah*,'" says Mr. Grove, "must have been a mountain range or district, the same as, or a part of, that called the mountains of *Abarim* (comp. Deut. xxxii. 49, with xxxiv. 1). It lay on the east of *Jordan*, contiguous to the field of *Moab*, and immediately opposite *Jericho*. The field of *Zophim* was situated on it, and its highest point or summit—its 'head'—was the *Mount Nebo*. If it was a proper name we can only conjecture that it denoted the whole or part of the range of the highlands on the east of the lower *Jordan*."—*Bibl. Dict.*

*Which looketh toward Jeshimon*. Margin: "Towards the wilderness." Keil and Del.: "'looks across the face of the desert.' *Jeshimon*, the desert, is the plain of *Ghor-el-Belka*, i.e., the valley of desolation on the north-eastern border of the *Dead Sea*."

Verse 21. *Amorites*, i.e., mountain-eers. One of the chief nations of the *Canaanites* (Gen. x. 15, 16).

Verse 22. Comp. chap. xx. 17.

Verse 23. *Jahaz*. "From the terms of the narrative in Num. xxi and Deut. ii," says Mr. Grove, "we should expect that *Jahaz* was in the extreme south part of the territory of *Sihon*, but yet north of the river *Arnon* (see Deut. ii. 24, 36; and the words in 31, 'begin to possess'), and in exactly this position a site named *Jazaza* is mentioned by Schwarz (227), though by him only. But this does not agree with the statements of *Eusebius*, who says it was existing in his day between *Medeba* and *Δηβούς*, by which he probably intends *Dibon*, which would place *Jahaz* considerably too far to the north. Like many others relating to the places east of the *Dead Sea*, this question must await further research."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 24. *Unto Jabbok*, now called *Wady Zerka*, a stream which intersects

the mountain range of Gilead, as it was afterwards called (comp. Josh. xii. 2, 5), and falls into the Jordan about 45 miles north of the Arnon.

*For the border of the children of Ammon was strong.* This was the reason why Sihon had not carried his conquests further and taken the territory of the Ammonites. The reason why the Israelites did not enter the land of the Ammonites is given in Deut. ii. 19.

Verse 25. *Heshbon.* This city was situated 20 miles due east of the Jordan at the point where it falls into the Dead Sea. The city is now in ruins, which are situated on a low hill, and are more than a mile in circumference. Its modern name is *Heshbân*.

*All the villages thereof.* Heb., as in margin: "the daughters," i.e., the smaller towns, which are enumerated in chap. xxxii. 34-38; and Josh. xiii. 15-28. Heshbon, as we see from the next verse, being the capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites.

Verse 26. *All his land.* "Evidently that to the north of the Arnon alone is intended."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 27-30. Dean Perowne speaks of this as "a song of victory, composed after a defeat of the Moabites and the occupation of their territory. It is in a taunting, mocking strain; and is commonly considered to have been written by some *Israelitish* bard on the occupation of the Amorite territory. Yet the manner in which it is introduced would rather lead to the belief that we have here the translation of an old Amorite ballad. . . . Then follows a little scrap of Amorite history: 'For Heshbon is the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and he had waged war with the former king of Moab, and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon. Wherefore the ballad-singers (המשלים) say:—

"Come ye to Heshbon,  
Let the city of Sihon be built and established!  
For fire went from Heshbon,

A flame out of the stronghold (קריה)  
of Sihon,

Which devoured Ar of Moab,  
The lords of the high places of Arnon.  
Woe to thee, Moab!

Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh!  
He (i.e., Chemosh thy god) hath given up his  
sons as fugitives,

And his daughters into captivity,  
To Sihon, king of the Amorites.

Then we cast them down; Heshbon perished  
even unto Dibon,

And we laid (it) waste unto Nophah, which  
(reacheth) unto Medeba.'

If the song is of Hebrew origin, then the former part of it is a biting taunt, 'Come, ye Amorites, into your city of Heshbon, and build it up again. Ye boasted that ye had burnt it with fire, and driven out its Moabite inhabitants; but now we are come in our turn and have burnt Heshbon, and driven you out as ye once burnt it and drove out its Moabite possessors.'—*Bibl. Dict.*

Another interpretation is given in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "In the first six lines (vers. 27, 28) the poet imagines for the Amorites a song of exultation for their victories over Moab, and for the consequent glories of Heshbon, their own capital. In the next three lines (ver. 29), he himself joins in this strain; which now becomes one of half-real, half-ironical compassion for the Moabites, whom their idol, Chemosh, was unable to save. But in the last two lines (ver. 30), a startling change takes place; and the new and decisive triumph of the poet's own countrymen is abruptly introduced; and the boastings of the Amorites fade utterly away."

Verse 29. *Chemosh*, i.e., the national deity of the Moabites (Jer. xlviii. 7, 13, 46), and of the Ammonites (Judg. xi. 24).

Verse 30. *Dibon*, afterwards called Dibon-Gad, "lay four miles north of the Arnon; and its extensive ruins still bear the name Dhibân. It was here that the Moabite stone was discovered by the Rev. T. Klein in 1868."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Nophah* "is unknown, unless it be Arneibah, 10 miles to the eastward of Medeba."—*Ibid.*

*Medeba* is now called *Madaba*, and is situated upon the top of a hill, about 4 miles S.E. of Heshbon.

Verse 32. *Jaazer* or *Jazer* is probably to be identified with the ruins of



es Szir, about 9 miles west of *Rabbath-Ammon*, and about 12 miles north of *Heshbon*.

Verse 33. *Bashan*. "The limits of Bashan are very strictly defined. It extended from the border of Gilead on the south to Mount Hermon on the north (Deut. iii. 3, 10, 14; Josh. xii. 5; 1. Chron. v. 23), and from the Arabah or Jordan valley on the west to Salehah (*Sulkhad*) and the borders of the Geshurites, and the Maacathites on the east (Josh. xii. 3-5; Deut. iii. 10)."

—*Bibl. Dict.*

*Edrei*. "Now Edhra'âh, vulgarly *Der'a*; situate on a branch of the Jar-

muk. This river is not mentioned in Scripture, but formed the boundary between Gilead and Bashan. The identification of *Edrei* rests on the frontier position of the site, on the modern name, and on the testimony of Eusebius; but it is only recently that the explorations of Wetzstein ('*Reisebericht*,' pp. 47, 8) have disclosed the facts that the original city was subterranean, and that its streets may still be seen running in all directions beneath the present inhabited town, which is built on the ground above."—*Speaker's Comm.*

### THE BENEFIT OF REVERSES.

(Verses 1-3.)

These verses suggest:—

I. That reverses are sometimes encountered in the path of duty.

"And when the Canaanite king of Arad, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners." An illustration of the opposition and the reverses with which we often meet in the way of duty. With our present characters and in our present circumstances duty is not always easy. In an evil world to tread the path of truth and right must always involve more or less of difficulty and trial. In following the Divine direction we are sure to meet with some "Canaanite king of Arad" and his allies. This is true of—

1. *The individual Christian life*. We have Canaanites in ourselves, in our carnal appetites and passions, &c. These resist the progress of the soul in holiness. Worthy spiritual attainments or achievements are never made without earnest effort and severe struggle.

2. *Christian enterprise*. Workers in the cause of Jesus Christ amongst men have to contend against opposition, and sometimes, like Israel at this time, sustain temporary repulse and

loss. This is true of Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, ministers of the Gospel, and Christian missionaries to the heathen both at home and abroad.

II. Reverses encountered in the path of duty arouse the true-hearted to more vigorous effort.

"And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." Repulse and loss stirred them up to take resolute measures to obtain a complete victory. That which utterly appals the cowardly, acts as a challenge to the courageous. Where the one cowers in dismay, the other rises into the exertion of conquering strength. To the true-hearted, reverses are a trumpet-call to renewed and more determined effort. In this instance the reverse led Israel to put forth:—

1. *Earnest prayer for success*. "And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord," &c. It has been well said that "this spirit would have been intolerable in the people of 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' had it not been that Divine justice had resolved to extirpate the awfully filthy and idolatrous nations of Canaan, to give their

land to the Israelites among whom His worship was preserved, and to make them the executioners of righteous wrath." The idea of this vow, by which they urged their prayer for victory, seems to be this, that if God would grant their request they would take to themselves no gain or glory from the conquest, but give all the honour to Him. True prayer is an excellent preparation for work or for warfare.

2. *Vigorous effort to succeed.* That Israel made such an effort is very clearly implied in the brief record.

To these two things united—wise and determined effort, and earnest believing prayer, all things are possible. "Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer? That kind of man never fails." And this especially when his will is "strong in the Lord." (a)

III. When reverses in the path of duty thus arouse the true-hearted to effort they contribute to their complete triumph.

It was so in this case. "And the

Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites," &c.

1. *Earnest prayer was answered by God.* He inspired them with determination and courage, and so granted their request. True prayer is always heard and answered by Him.

2. *Wise and resolute effort achieved success.* "They utterly destroyed them and their cities." Thus a slight reverse stirred them up to such efforts as resulted in a complete triumph. (b) Apply this to Christian life and work. (c)

Conclusion.

1. *Warning to those who oppose any true and good cause.* "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

2. *Encouragement to those who are toiling in good but difficult enterprises.* Be not disheartened by difficulties. Let reverses rouse you to more powerful and persistent efforts, and they will thus urge you onward to the achievement of more complete and splendid conquests. (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) It is not ease, but effort—not facility, but difficulty—that makes men. There is, perhaps, no station in life in which difficulties have not to be encountered and overcome before any decided measure of success can be achieved. Those difficulties are, however, our best instructors, as our mistakes often form our best experience. We learn wisdom from failure more than from success. We often discover what *will* do by finding out what will not do; and he who never made a mistake never made a discovery. Horne Tooke used to say of his studies in intellectual philosophy, that he had become all the better acquainted with the country, through having had the good luck sometimes to lose his way. And a distinguished investigator of physical science has left it on record that whenever in the course of his researches he encountered an apparently insuperable obstacle, he generally found himself on the brink of some novel discovery. The very greatest things—great thoughts, discoveries, inventions—have generally been nurtured in hardship, often pondered over in sorrow, and at length established with difficulty.—*Samuel Smiles.*

(b) It has been said, and truly, that it is the

defeat that tries the general more than the victory. Washington lost far more battles than he gained; but he succeeded in the end. The Romans, in their most victorious campaigns, almost invariably began with defeats. Moreau used to be compared, by his companions, to a drum, which nobody hears of except it be beaten. Wellington's military genius was perfected by encounter with difficulties of, apparently, the most overwhelming character, but which only served to nerve his resolution, and bring out more prominently his great qualities as a man and a general. So the skilful mariner obtains his best experience amidst storms and tempests, which train him to self-reliance, courage, and the highest discipline; and we probably owe to rough seas and wintry nights, the best training of our race of British seamen, who are certainly not surpassed by any in the world.

The battle of life, in by far the greater number of cases, must necessarily be fought up-hill; and to win it without a struggle were perhaps to win it without honour. If there were no difficulties there would be no success; if there were nothing to struggle for, there would be nothing to be achieved.

Difficulties may intimidate the weak, but they act only as a wholesome stimulus to men of pluck and resolution. All experience of life, indeed, serves to prove that the impediments thrown in the way of human advancement may, for the most part, be overcome by steady good conduct, honest zeal, activity, perseverance, and, above all, by a determined resolution to surmount difficulties, and stand up manfully against misfortune. When Columbus was threatened by the mutineers amongst his crew, he himself, hopeful and unsubdued, bore up against all opposition. "Give me but three days," he said; and before the three days had passed, he trod the shores of the New World. —*Ibid.*

(c) Need any one be discouraged who has begun to live a Christian life because so often he has failed and fallen into backsliding? Is a true pupil discouraged because so many of his lessons are imperfect, because he has forced holidays which have broken up the impetus of study, if still the purpose to be a student remains with him? Whatever may have been the arguments of the past, let them be forgotten. Try again. There are thousands of Christians who too soon grow discouraged,

saying, "I have proved that I was mistaken. I have proved that the root of the matter was not in me. There is no use; I have tried and failed." There is all the use in the world. No man ever fails until death settles the great conflict. Because you have begun and lagged, because you have begun and stumbled, because you have begun and gone back a little way, do not give up the whole contest. —*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore with. Look at the Mont Cenis tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks: with a sharp tool, edged with a diamond, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says: "Is thy work hard? set a harder resolution against it, for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something harder still." May the Spirit of God work in thee invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance. Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel. Under persecutions and difficulties, let God's people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it, for according to our faith so shall it be unto us. —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

### A DEADLY PLAGUE AND A DIVINE ANTIDOTE.

(Verses 4-9.)

Let us notice—

#### I. The sin of the people.

They fall once more into the sin of which they had so often been guilty in former times—that of murmuring. "The people spake against God and against Moses," &c. But let us consider—

1. *The occasion of their sin.* (1) The circuitous route by which they journeyed. "They journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom." Their direct way would have been through the land of Edom; but the King of Edom opposed this; so they were compelled to travel by this circuitous route, compassing the land of Edom (see notes on chap. xx. 14-21). (2) The trying country over which they journeyed. "The low-lying plain of Arabah on the whole is a terrible desert, with a loose, sandy soil, and drifts of granite and other stones, where terrible sand-storms sometimes arise from the neighbourhood of the Red Sea." "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the

way" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver.

4). (3) The privations which they encountered on their journey. The Arabah was not likely to furnish them with much food; so they were almost or altogether dependent upon the manna with which they were supplied by God. And it is very probable that there would be a great scarcity of drinkable water. Hence "the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" &c.

2. *The nature of their sin.* (1) Murmuring. They "spake against God and against Moses." (a) (2) Unbelief. How sinful was the want of faith which they manifested in speaking of dying in the wilderness, after all they had experienced of the protection and provision of God! (b) (3) Ingratitude. The goodness of God in supplying their wants is altogether disregarded by them. They speak as though they were utterly destitute: "There is no bread, neither is there any water." (c) (4) Contempt of Divine blessings.



"And our soul loatheth this light bread,"—"a word of excessive scorn; as if they had said, 'This innutritive, unsubstantial, cheat-stomach stuff.'"—*A. Clark.* Thus their rebellion was one of great heinousness, involving several sins.

## II. The punishment of their sin.

"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." The punishment was,

1. *Severe.* The bite of the serpent poisoned the body of its victim, causing intense and burning pain, and resulting in death. "Much people of Israel died."

2. *Just.* Their heinous sin called for a severe punishment. "They had unjustly complained for want of water (ver. 5), to chastise them for which God sends upon them this thirst, which no water would quench. Those that cry without cause have justly cause given them to cry out. They distrustfully concluded that they must 'die in the wilderness,' and God took them at their word, chose their delusions, and brought their unbelieving fears upon them; many of them did die."—*M. Henry.*

3. *Divine.* Their punishment was from God. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people." In the Arabah, venomous reptiles abound (comp. Deut. viii. 15). "Yet we never hear of their being bitten or killed by them till now. From this we infer that they had been marvelously protected hitherto from this as from other dangers of the way; but the protection which they had experienced being now withdrawn, the serpents—in this part of the desert unusually numerous—had their poisonous jaws unbound, and smote them at their will."—*Kitto.* (d)

## III. The penitence of the people.

Let us mark how their penitence was awakened, and developed, and led to their relief.

1. *Their penitence led to their penitence.* "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said we have sinned, for we

have spoken against the Lord, and against thee." "When he slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and inquired early after God." The penitence which is begotten of punishment seldom leads to moral improvement. (e)

2. *Their penitence led them to appeal to Moses for help.* They said unto him, "Pray unto the Lord for us, that he take away the serpents from us." This request implies,—(1) Consciousness of their moral unfitness to approach God acceptably. (2) Faith in the efficacy of intercessory prayer. (3) The persuasion that intercessory prayer to be efficacious must be offered by the good. Thus their request to Moses to "pray unto the Lord for" them was an undesigned and convincing testimony to the excellence of his character and conduct.

3. *In answer to their appeal Moses entreated God on their behalf.* "And Moses prayed for the people." He manifested in this the true magnanimity of a godly soul. He blesses them who reviled him, and prays for them who despitefully used him (comp. Matt. v. 44). (g)

IV. The Divine antidote for the deadly plague.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole;" &c. (vers. 8, 9). That this had a typical significance is placed beyond dispute by the words of our Lord to Nicodemus in John iii. 14, 15. This application of the incident we shall endeavour to make hereafter. At present we confine our attention to four facts concerning Heaven's antidote for the deadly bite of the serpents.

1. *It was prescribed by God.* Man could not stay the dread ravages of these serpents. Their bite was poisonous and deadly. And in answer to the prayer of His servant, Jehovah interposed for the salvation of the people. He directed Moses what to do to arrest the onward march of death. "Jehovah said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent," &c. Human salvation from sin is of Divine origin; it is an outcome of infinite wisdom and love.

2. *It resembled the poisonous serpents.* "Make thee a fiery serpent," &c. The brazen serpent was made to resemble the fiery serpents which had bitten them, but it was without venom and thoroughly harmless. The disease and death came by the serpents, and the healing and life were to come by this serpent. So "God sent his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3). "Since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead" (comp. 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22-24).

3. *Its efficacy was conditional.* "It shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It was not the mere look that saved. The look involved—(1) Faith in the Divine promise that every one

who looked upon the brazen serpent should live. If they questioned and criticised the fitness of the remedy they perished; if they believed the promise and looked to the serpent, they were healed (h). (2) Obedience to the Divine direction. How simple are these conditions! How universally available! He who looks in faith to Jesus Christ shall be saved from sin. Comp. Isa. xlv. 22; John iii. 14, 15. (i)

4. *Its efficacy was infallible.* "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Whoever complied with the Divine condition was healed by the Divine power. Whosoever looked lived. And whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life (John iii. 15, 16, 36).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 267.

(b) For illustrations on *Unbelief*, see p. 252.

(c) For illustrations on *Ingratitude*, see pp. 247, 368.

(d) For illustrations on *The Punishment of Sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 258, 312, 318, 374.

(e) For an illustration on *Penitence Begotten of Punishment*, see p. 269.

(f) For illustrations on *The Power of Prayer*, see pp. 183, 225.

(g) The brave only know how to forgive—it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue that human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good and kind actions; cowards have even fought, nay, sometimes conquered; but a coward never forgave—it is not his nature.—*L. Sterne.*

There are some persons that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more—an everlasting pique remaining; and they cannot but discover a great shyness, shun them, hulk them, decline them, and think and speak hardly of them on all occasions. But the Divine nature in the regenerate inclines a person to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate, if there have been breaks, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature—by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.—*John Howe.*

For another illustration on the *Forgiving spirit*, see p. 317.

(h) As a dim, dazzled eye, that looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness, was of

more avail to a poor Israelite, when stung with a fiery serpent, than any use that could possibly be made of all his other members—little could the swiftness of his feet, strength of his body, nimbleness of hands, volubility of tongue, quickness of ear, or anything else have availed, had there not been an eye to have looked on it—so, without faith, we lie dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot but perish of the mortal stings which Satan hath blistered us withal; so that had we perfect repentance, sound knowledge, and sincere love, not one of them, nor all of them together, could possibly cure us if there were not faith to apprehend Christ for our satisfaction, and a propitiation for all our sins. It is only our faith in Christ—a true faith, though a weak, dim-sighted faith—that looking up to the typified serpent, Christ Jesus, can cure our wounded, sin-sick souls, and make us here to live to God, and hereafter in all happiness with Him.—*Paul Bayne.*

Sight is the noblest sense; it is quick—we can look from earth to heaven in a moment; it is large—we can see the hemisphere of the heavens at one view; it is sure and certain (in hearing, we may be deceived), and, lastly, it is the most affecting sense. Even so, faith is the quickest, the largest, the most certain, the most affecting grace: like an eagle in the clouds, at one view it sees Christ in heaven, and looks down upon the world; it looks backwards and forwards; it sees things past, present, and to come. Therefore this grace is said (2 Cor. iv. 18) to behold things unseen and eternal.—*Richard Sibbs.*

(i) God did not require of every Israelite,

or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which the serpent upon the pole was made, or by what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it: it was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another: if the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is "faith," which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple, as by the strongest and

most towering mind; it is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men; He required not that every man should be a philosopher or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain, and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest: could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health by the expulsion of the venom.—*Charnocke.*

### ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.

(Verse 4.)

"And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is not our rest, it is not our abode, but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity.

I. Point out the discouragements in the way.

1. *The way is circuitous.* This is suggested by the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor," &c. . . . Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and fears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy; they seem to themselves to go backward, and, indeed, are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing and recovering the ground that has been lost.

2. *The way is through a wilderness.* Moses reminded Israel of this in Deut. viii. 15, 16. A wilderness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, &c. Thus, this world is a state of great

privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, &c. In a spiritual sense, this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the Christian knows they are not the produce of the soil. Again: there is much intricacy in the Christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness: so the Christian often knows not how to explore his path. We must "search the Scriptures," and ask the guidance of the Spirit. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c.

3. *The way lies through a hostile country.* The Israelites were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: during our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God," &c. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, and combine their efforts for our destruction.

4. *The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage are discouraging.* There are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens His people, though He pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. These chastenings of the Lord often drink up or oppress the spirit, and overwhelm the soul.



5. *The total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way.* I do not think that all that died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number; yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition" (comp. Gal. iv. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 21). Nothing weakens the confidence of the Christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks.

6. *The length of the way is discouraging.* The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness, was forty years. This was a tedious journey: a type of the journeys of the church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey. Now, though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain. We must hold out unto the end.

II. Direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

1. *It is "a right way."* Infinite Wisdom has ordained it; and if you

reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage; no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. Our sufferings are necessary to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin.

2. *God is with His people in the way.* He was with Israel to guide and defend them (comp. Matt. xxviii. 20). God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but He is in the Church by His special grace, as a vital principle, and ever-living friend, to sustain, animate, and influence.

3. *There is no other way that leads to heaven.* You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct you.

Go forward, then, Christian; go forward; "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

If any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good," &c.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

## THE UNDESIGNED TESTIMONY OF THE UNGODLY TO THE PRECIOUSNESS AND POWER OF PIETY.

### (Verse 7.)

Briefly narrate the facts and circumstances.

In their trouble the Israelites come to Moses, confessing their sin, and asking him to intercede for them with God; and in this request of the text we have an illustration of—*The striking testimony which the ungodly often bear to the value and importance of piety.* It is ever true that vice pays homage to virtue, and that the good ever command the respect and the conscience of the evil. His life condemns theirs; they feel that he

is a better and a nobler man than they are. They may hate his religion; but they testify to its value in the esteem in which their consciences hold him. It was so here; the people had been speaking against Moses, and yet they come to him, and ask him to pray for them. They witness to the value of piety.

I. By showing that the want of it is weakness—

The wicked man often swaggers and boasts; but he is an arrant coward in trouble. A guilty "conscience doth

make cowards of us all." The people here were in great danger, and they were full of alarm. They felt that they could not pray, and they were afraid to die. They were pitifully weak because they were ungodly, &c.

II. By seeking help from him whom they knew to be "a man of God."

They owned that Moses could help them, though they could not help themselves. They had spoken against Moses, and had treated him badly; yet they expect him to forgive them and to pray for them. Men of the world expect God's people to be better than themselves. Is not this a grand testimony to the value and importance of piety?

III. By confessing that Moses had nothing to fear from God, while they had everything to fear.

They ask him to pray to God for them; they were in dread of God. By this they own that piety is best to approach God; and by seeking help from God through Moses, they confess that their past conduct was wrong. They condemned themselves.

IV. By acknowledging that Moses could get from God what they could not.

Their act testified to their belief that Moses had power with God, and that they had not. It is a grand thing for man to have access to God; for sinful, weak man, to have power with the Almighty! The wicked dreads God; the godly pleads with Him as a child with his father. God hears and answers him; he has power with God. The wicked feels this and seeks his help when he has been brought into distress. There is no treasure for man like piety. All feel this when, as in

the text, they are in trouble and in the presence of death.

Thus by their request to Moses the Israelites condemned their own life, and bore striking, though unconscious, testimony to the value of piety and the importance of religion. This has been the testimony of the ungodly in all ages;—*e.g.*, Moses and Pharaoh; Samuel and the people (1 Sam. xii. 19); Herod and John the Baptist. And to-day the ungodly bear striking testimony to the value of piety:—

1. *By expecting Christians to be better than themselves.* They ought to be so; but the point now is, that worldly men expect them to be so. Why should they be better, unless it be for their piety?

2. *By seeking the help of Christians when they are in trouble or in the presence of death.* It is religion that they think of then. It is those whom they believe to be God's people that they send for to help them. They send not for old associates in sin; they feel that they cannot help them. But they send for the minister or for some other Christian to pray with them. They thus testify that piety is best for life, and best for death, and best for all. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Conclusion.

1. *Let Christians live so as to command the conscience of the Christless.* Let their life commend religion, &c.

2. *Let the Christless be true to himself by living up to his convictions.* Sad for one to live a life his conscience tells him is wrong. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."—*David Lloyd.*

## A TERRIBLE CALAMITY AND AN EARNEST PRAYER.

(Verse 7.)

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us."

In the memorable conversation Christ held with Nicodemus (John iii. 1-21), He refers to the circumstance of the

Brazen Serpent erected by Moses as a pointed illustration of His own death—as illustrating the method of forgiving sin. He also refers to the grace of the Spirit as the effective

method of subduing sin. And the recollection of these important doctrines will be of great service to us in the contemplation of the important history now before us.

**I. A terrible calamity; the just consequence of sin.**

"The Lord sent fiery serpents," &c. They existed in that part of the wilderness before, but were not permitted to invade the camp. The restraint was taken off now, and they were sent to do the work of death amidst the guilty thousands of the congregation. "*Fiery serpents*," from their colour and aspect, or from the intense heat of their sting, as though the current of blood were changed into tides of fire in the sufferer's veins.

Why sent? For Israel's sin. What sin? Sin of murmuring; sin of unbelief; sin of rebellion. Seven times Israel murmured and mutinied against Moses; and seven times were they threatened or punished. A discontented man will find or make something to repine at everywhere. Sometimes the way was too long; then no water—or it was bitter; then no bread—or it was light bread. Either way, "The people spake against God, and against Moses."

In Israel's history we see our own. Human nature is not improved, as some wines grow mellow with age, for we find ourselves just as perverse and rebellious as they were. If any change it must be for the worse rather than the better. Our sins are against greater light and greater love; not against the Law only, but the Gospel too; not against Moses, but Christ.

Learn, that *sin brings sorrow*. Sin flatters like a serpent at the beginning, but stings like one at last (comp. Prov. xxiii. 32).

See the *resemblance between sin and its punishment*. The Israelites had been like serpents to Moses and Aaron, always ready to nip and sting; now God sends serpents among them. "Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord;" and they were destroyed by fire. The Jews crucified our Lord; the Romans crucified them in vast numbers. Many an undutiful

child has found his parent's wrongs avenged in his own offspring.

The serpents in the camp were *very numerous*; not here and there one, but in great numbers. Alas, how many evils does sin produce in all the relations and engagements of life! How many *serpents* follow in the train of sin! They follow you at home and abroad, in the family and in the world, in your lying down and rising up.

There is the serpent of *remorse in the conscience*—a serpent very difficult to untwine from the folds of the heart. The serpent of *discord in the family*, when a man's vices follow him home, and he finds the effects of his own misconduct breaking up the peace of home (comp. Prov. xi. 29). The serpent of *treachery among your friendships*; for the world shakes from it those whom it cannot trust. The serpent of *disgrace and contempt*, the consequences of the vices of the character and the violation of integrity and uprightness. "What fruit had ye then in those things?" &c. (Rom. vi. 21). Then there is the serpent of endless agony and despair in "hell, where their worm dieth not," &c.

**II. An earnest resolution and prayer; the result of sanctified affliction.**

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." Their sufferings led to humiliation, repentance, and prayer. They knew that none but He who sent the affliction could take it away, and, therefore, they did not ask Moses to try what he could do by any process of legislation or human device, but—"Pray unto the Lord," &c. Prayer is your only remedy for the serpent brood of sin. "We have sinned, for," &c. Sanctified affliction leads to this. Examples: Job, Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 18), the prodigal (Luke xv. 14 sqq.).

**III. A mysterious appointment, the result of Divine grace.**

"And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent," &c.

Samuel Thodey.



## THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 8, 9.)

"A type," says Mr. Steward, "is a fact precedent to some other greater than itself, designed to prepare the way for it, and to be a voucher for it, as pre-ordained and brought to pass by the Divine wisdom and power. It is the shadow of a coming truth projected far before it, showing its figure rather than its substance, its image, not its properties."

The words of our Lord in John iii. 14, 15, are our warrant for regarding the brazen serpent as a type of Himself. In the serpent-bitten Israelites we have an illustration of the condition of sinful men, and in the brazen serpent we have an illustration of the remedy for the sad condition of sinful men. We discover an analogy in:—

## I. The malady.

1. In both cases it was *communicated*. It was communicated to the Israelites by the bite of the serpent. Sin was imparted to man by "that old serpent, which is the devil." It is not native to human nature, but a foul and terrible importation.

2. In both it is *painful*. The bite of the serpent caused the most distressing pain; the poison burned and tormented the victims. So the venom of sin rankles in human nature; sin causes discord, guilt, dread, anguish; it is an element of torment.

3. In both it is *deadly*. Great numbers of the Israelites died from its effects. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death."

4. In both, *human remedies are un-availing*. It is said that the effects of the bite of the serpents were so rapid that "no remedy for the most virulent poison could, had it even been at hand, have been administered with sufficient rapidity and efficiency to have saved the people." No human means can arrest the deadly progress of the poison of sin, impart spiritual life and health, &c.

It must not be overlooked that the malady and its consequences in the one case were physical and temporal; in the other, spiritual and everlasting. Death would end the one; it is powerless to end the other.

## II. The remedy.

In respect of this there is a twofold analogy.

1. The remedy in both cases was of *Divine origin*. No man could have devised a remedy for human sin and suffering. No angel could have grappled with the disease. In His sovereign grace God originated the method of human salvation.

2. There is an analogy as to the *means by which the remedy was effected*. (1) The serpent-bitten Israelites were healed by means of a serpent of similar appearance to those through whose bites they were perishing, but entirely free from venom. We are healed of sin and saved from death, by "God sending His Own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3), yet Himself perfectly free from sin. (2) The serpent without poison was uplifted to overcome the dire effects of the bite of the poisonous ones; so He who was made "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," "yet without sin," took upon Him the curse of the world by dying upon the cross, that He might thereby destroy death and the curse. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" &c.

## III. The appropriation.

The bitten Israelites had to look to the Brazen Serpent, and looking they were saved. The sinner has to believe in Jesus Christ, and believing he is saved. The look of the Israelites is a remarkable illustration of faith. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved," &c. This method of appropriation—

1. Is *simple and easy*. Look, and be saved. Believe, and live. The little child, and the hoary patriarch; the

ignorant plebeian, and the educated philosopher, can and do believe. We are naturally credulous; we often believe too readily. As all can believe, the remedy is within the reach of all. Take heed lest the very simplicity of the appropriation be made by you an occasion of stumbling. (a)

2. *Is unmeritorious.* The dying Israelite did not merit healing and life by his look to the Brazen Serpent. Our faith cannot merit salvation. Faith excludes the idea of merit. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

3. *Is indispensable.* If the bitten Israelite refused to look to the Brazen Serpent he speedily died, notwithstanding the remedy. So faith is indispensable to salvation (comp. John iii. 18, 26). (b)

IV. The result.

"It came to pass, that if a serpent

had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." "Who-soever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The serpent-bitten Israelites, who looked to the brazen serpent, were saved from physical anguish and death; the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ is saved from spiritual anguish and eternal death. The Israelite, saved for the time, would die soon or late; but the believer in Christ has everlasting and ever-glorious life.

Conclusion.

This world is like the camp of Israel. Sin is doing its terrible work. There is but one method of deliverance. Believe, and be saved. This one method is gloriously available to every one. "Who-soever believeth in Him," &c. Hence, if any one perish, he perishes by his own guilty neglect of the free and glorious remedy.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) By the term *looking*, we mean not an examination of the proofs which establish the truth of the Christian religion, although the testimony borne in its favour has been confirmed by wonders and miracles, and divers other effects of Divine power (Heb. ii. 4). We mean not by the term *looking*, the study of the Scriptures, although the word of prophecy, which is most sure, bears testimony throughout to Jesus. All this study is commendable and necessary, and far be it from us to dissuade you from a study which is in the present day too much neglected, and without which it is to be feared many will never come to look at Jesus Christ. But still all these labours together are not worth and cannot supersede the look for which we plead, whereas this look alone has often superseded them. No doubt "faith cometh by hearing;" in other words, hearing is the origin of faith, its starting point; but it belongs to the eye to finish the uncompleted work of hearing. Where, in your opinion, is there a man who has heard much, and read much, but not looked? a man who has carefully examined the proofs of the divinity of Christ, a man who has admitted them, and yet not looked at Christ? a man whom these proofs have convinced, that is to say vanquished, forced to believe, but whose faith, wholly passive, though it receives and yields to the truth, does not embrace it, and become united to it by a proper movement, and to whom, strange to say, the truth at once is

and is not? a man who, conducted by his studies to the very foot of the cross, remains there with downcast eyes, never raising them towards the cross, nor towards Him whom it bears, and whose adorable blood is running down this accursed tree? Others have not been able to believe until they lifted their eyes and looked at Christ. Those, I admit, have believed but with a forced faith, on the account of the whole world, and not on their own personal account; with a faith which is to them only a yoke and burden; a faith which they support, but which does not support them until, passing beyond this terminated labour, this exhausted spring, they begin to look simply at Jesus. Are we rash in speaking of this look as a condition of true faith, when Jesus Christ Himself has said, "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him" (i.e., every one who, having seen the Son, hath believed in Him), "hath everlasting life." These words, brethren, decidedly annex life to a look, not indeed to every kind of look, but to an attentive, earnest, prolonged look; a look more simple than that of observation; a look which looks, and does nothing more; a lively, unaffected, childlike look; a look in which the whole soul appears; a look of the heart and not of the intellect; one which does not seek to decompound its object, but receives it into the soul in all its entirety through the eye. —Alex. Vinet, D.D.

(b) The look of faith is saving. You can-

not turn a trustful eye to Him and not receive fullest salvation. Did any wounded Israelite look and not live? So no beholding sinner dies. . . . You never can have health, but from the cross. The rich must look; for riches cannot save. The poor must look; for poverty is no cloak for guilt. The learned must look; for learning can devise no other

help. The ignorant must look; for ignorance is not heaven's key. None ever lived without soul-sickness. None regains strength apart from Christ. But His cross stands uplifted high, even as the pole in Israel's camp. And it is not a vain voice which cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."  
—*H. Law, D.D.*

## THE BRAZEN SERPENT; OR, THE TERRORS OF EXISTENCE FACED IN FAITH.

(Verses 8, 9.)

The story of the Brazen Serpent actually took place, we cannot doubt, as recorded by Moses. The notion of a "myth," which rationalistic interpreters might here suggest, is in this case absolutely inadmissible. For in the subsequent history, many hundreds of years later, we read of King Hezekiah being moved to destroy it, and to grind it to powder, because it had become an object of idolatrous veneration to the Israelites in his day. This fact, however, is not in the least inconsistent with its having been intended by the Divine mind to be *also* an embodied image or parable of spiritual and eternal truths—as true now in England in this nineteenth century of our era, as in Israel thousands of years ago.

This incident of the Brazen Serpent is recorded in a part of the Sacred Story which we are specially authorized to consider as typical—I mean the story of the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness (see 1 Cor. x. 11). It is therefore probable, at least, that any event recorded in this part of the Sacred History will repay study in that view. And with regard to this particular incident in that journey, it should be noted that our Lord Himself, in His conversation with Nicodemus, selected it out of all history to stand as a symbol of some of the highest mysteries of redemption.

What then is the primary and simplest meaning of the incident? It is a fundamental principle of all sound interpretation of inspired sayings, that all other and deeper lessons which they may be intended or adapted to teach,

must have their root in, and take their form and outline from, its primary and original sense. Now it is, I think, clear that the Brazen Serpent was primarily intended simply to represent and vividly picture to the suffering Israelites those terrible and repulsive instruments of God's avenging justice through which He was at that time inflicting suffering upon them for their sins. In the course of their wanderings they were brought into a region of great suffering and want. Under the pressure of their sufferings, they were led to murmur against Moses and Aaron; they looked back with regret and longing to the days when they "sat by the flesh-pots of Egypt." The spiritual degradation and misery of their life at that time, and their condition as slaves in a heathen land, were forgotten; nothing but the fleshly comforts and ease which they enjoyed there, compared with their present sufferings, was remembered. Their high calling and destiny as God's chosen people was overlooked or held cheap. This spirit of mind, like that of him "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and, caring for the present, despised the greater future, would, if it had become habitual, have brought them to destruction and utter alienation from God. A sharp remedy was therefore needed, and was applied by God's judicial providence. Fiery serpents were sent amongst them, from whose bite many of them died. It was in this state of things that Moses was directed to make a Brazen Serpent—that is, an actual image of the serpents from which they were at the time suf-



fering; and to set it up on a pole before their eyes. And he was to teach them that if they contemplated this image in faith, they should be healed. How can we doubt what was the primary meaning of this? Surely it must have been intended simply to teach the great and pregnant truth, that if, when any of the terrors of God set themselves in array against us, we have the courage, instead of turning away our eyes and thoughts from them, to *look deliberately at them in faith*; to hold them up, as it were, firmly between ourselves and heaven, and to contemplate them as God's appointments, and therefore certainly good under the circumstances, and if used aright; then the sting will be taken from these afflictions, and they will be turned into sources of spiritual blessing. It was a call to face God's terrible dispensation in faith and submission.

It is our duty and our wisdom to do so. To do otherwise, to keep any dark corner of our consciousness unlooked at, is to lay up a store of fears and uncertainties for our weaker moments, and to allow the enemy to lay an ambush against our peace. And even if the terror be one that affects only other men, not ourselves directly, yet when we become aware of it our wisdom and our duty is to face it, holding to the hand of God. Not to do so is selfishness. To suffer in other men's suffering is to have the mind of Christ; and all that is not that is sin. And, besides, unless we do dare to look all terrors in the face, we can never feel safe, even for ourselves. For if we believe in injustice or cruelty in God towards any creature, how can we be

sure He will not be unjust to us too, and to those we love?

Job is a great example of such courage in facing stern and mysterious facts in God's providence. . . . This powerful delineation of the terrible mysteries of evil and of sorrow that met him, clearly shows that he saw them in all their extremest terror—that he felt them in all their acuteness. And yet, nevertheless, he did, in the end, submit in absolute resignation and meekness to God. It was not, then, in blindness or darkness that he did so; but with eyes wide open and a heart keenly sensitive to all. Thus did he hold up his Brazen Serpent to the light; thus did he at last learn in full sight of it to acknowledge the Divine justice and goodness. This alone is true faith. Easy it is in sunny times, while sailing in sunny seas, . . . to call God, "Father," and believe that He is a Father. But the difficulty is to do so when all things seem against us, or when, though we ourselves are in prosperity, we see others round us in pain, in distress, in agony; to call God Father, as the Divine Man of Sorrows did, while hanging on a cross of torture, or from out of an agony of bloody sweat; when man is felt to be cruel and unjust; when the earth beneath our feet trembles; when the midday sky over our heads is darkened; when God Himself seems to have forsaken us, and we cannot see the reason. To cry then too, "Abba, Father," and believe what we say, is true faith—the only faith that fits the world as it is, and will carry us through life with eyes open.—*Canon Lyttelton, M.A., in "Good Words."*

## UNEVENTFUL STAGES IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE

### (Verses 10-15.)

These verses yield the following homiletical observations:—

I. That many scenes in the pilgrimage of life are quiet and uneventful.

From their encampment in the Ara-

bah, with its events of intense and painful interest, the Israelites proceed to Oboth, or rather to Zalmonah, then to Punon, and then to Oboth (chap. xxxiii. 41-43), then to Ije-abarim, &c. At these

places nothing occurs to detain the historian, nothing which calls for record; the life of the people was ordinary and uneventful. So now, the greater portion of the life of the great majority of men is common-place, ordinary, and prosaic. This is a wise and kind arrangement of Providence, for—

1. *We are not fitted to bear the strain of continued and deep interest and excitement.* Our mental and our emotional natures would both suffer by the undue tension of such excitement. Both brain and heart would soon succumb to the strain. If the bow be always tightly strung it will be injured, and perhaps destroyed.

2. *The healthiest minds find pleasure and progress in quiet scenes and duties.* Craving for constant excitement is a characteristic of a diseased mind. Restlessness and love of change are indications of mental superficiality and poverty. Active and healthy minds find satisfaction and delight in the ordinary scenes and duties of daily life. (a)

II. *That in the quiet and uneventful scenes of life we should follow the Divine directions.*

The Israelites did so at this time. They were commanded (Deut. ii. 9) not to contend with the Moabites in battle, and for this reason they passed along the eastern border of the land of Moab, without entering into that land.

1. *The teachings of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are given to us for our whole life.* The directions of the former and the inspiration of the latter, are for life's ordinary seasons as well as for its epochs and crises. The plan of God covers our entire life. His will is binding upon us at all times, and in all places and circumstances.

2. *We can most effectually illustrate the principles and the power of godliness in the ordinary and uneventful scenes of life.* The testimony of our life in such seasons is—(1) *More natural* than in exciting and critical seasons. On the red-letter days of our life we are specially watchful and wise and diligent,

&c.—(2) *More continuous.* Seasons of great interest and importance occur but seldom in human lives; they are rare exceptions; as a rule, life is uneventful, prosaic. And consequently the testimony of our life in its ordinary seasons is—(3) *More influential* than in its few and exceptional seasons. Hence, the necessity of following the Divine directions at such times, and at all times. (b)

III. *That many of the records of the pilgrimage of life are transient.*

In "the book of the wars of Jehovah" many interesting records were probably written. It was a book which was of a religious spirit. The honour of their victories it ascribed to Jehovah (see *Explanatory Notes* on this verse). But it is lost. Nought of it remains save one or two brief quotations. "It was not," says Trapp, "any part of the Canon,—for God hath provided, that not one hair of that sacred head is diminished,—but as the chronicles of England, or some famous poem." How many human writings perish! Even good books do not always live. All material things pass away; but the spiritual abides. Books perish; but truth is imperishable. The records which exist only in books are doomed to oblivion, but those which exist in human hearts will live for ever. Books are perishable; souls are immortal. What is written "in fleshy tables of the heart" can never be erased. Let us, therefore, seek to communicate truth unto men, and to inspire men with the passion for the attainment of truth.

IV. *That present progress is promoted by the recollection of God's past doings.*

We infer this from the use which the Israelites made of "the book of the wars of Jehovah." The quotation from this book is very obscure. Of the first clause Dr. A. Clarke says, "This clause is impenetrably obscure." The passage from the book is "a reference rather than a quotation. Contemporaries who had 'the Book of the Wars of Jehovah' at hand, could of

course supply the context." But supposing the book was what we take it to have been, a collection of odes celebrating the glorious acts of Jehovah for the Israelites; then we are warranted in affirming that they took courage in the present by the consideration of what He had done for them in the past.

Former victories inspired them with resolution and hope. (c)

In our pilgrimage let us cultivate this spirit. Let the light which shines from the mercies already received cheer our spirits as we advance to meet the duties and difficulties, the burdens and battles, that lie before us.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When we look back over a lengthened series of years, we seldom find that remembrance clings fondly to moments in which the mind has been most agitated, the passions most active, but rather to the intervals in which hour stole on hour with the same quiet tread. The transitory fever of the senses it is only a diseased imagination that ponders over and recalls; the triumphs which flatter our self-esteem look pale and obsolete from the distance of years, as arches of lath and plaster, thrown up in haste for the march of a conqueror, seem frail and tawdry when we see them in after time, spanning the solid thoroughfares with columns already mouldering, and stripped of the banners and the garlands that had clad them in the bravery of an hour.

However varied the course of our life, whatsoever the phases of pleasure and ambition through which it has swept along, still, when in memory we would revive the times that were comparatively the happiest, those times would be found to have been the calmest.

As the body for health needs regularity in habits, and will even reconcile itself to habits not in themselves best fitted for longevity, with less injury to the system than might result from abrupt changes to the training by which athletes attain their vigour—so the mind for health needs a certain clockwork of routine; we like to look forward with a certain tranquil sentiment of security; when we pause from the occupation of to-day, which custom has made dear to us, there is a charm in the mechanical confidence with which we think that the same occupation will be renewed at the same hour to-morrow. And thus monotony itself is a cause and element of happiness which, amidst the shifting tumults of the world, we are apt to ignore. Plutarch, indeed, says truly that "the shoe takes the form of the foot, not the foot the form of the shoe," meaning thereby that "man's life is moulded by the disposition of his soul." But new shoes chafe the feet, new customs the soul. The stoutest pedestrian would flag on a long walk if he put on new shoes at every second mile.

It is with a sentiment of misplaced pity, perhaps of contempt still more irrational, that the busy man, whose existence is loud and noisy, views another who seems to him less to live than to vegetate. The traveller, whirled from capital to capital, stops for a night's

lodging at some convent rising lone amidst unfrequented hills. He witnesses the discipline of the monastic life drilled into unvarying forms, day and year portioned out, according to inch scale, by the chimes of the undeviating bell. He re-enters his carriage with a sense of relief; how dreary must be the existence he leaves behind! Why dreary? Because so monotonous. Shallow reasoner! it is the monotony that has reconciled the monk to his cell. Even prisoners, after long years, have grown attached to the sameness of their prison, and have shrunk back from the novelty of freedom when turned loose upon the world. Not that these illustrations constitute a plea for monastery or prison; they but serve to show that monotony, even under circumstances least favourable to the usual elements of happiness, becomes a happiness in itself, growing, as it were, unseen, out of the undisturbed certainty of peculiar customs. As the pleasure the ear finds in rhyme is said to arise from its recurrence at measured periods—from the gratified expectation that at certain intervals certain effects will be repeated—so it is in life: the recurrence of things same or similar, the content in the fulfilment of expectations so familiar and so gentle that we are scarcely conscious that they were formed, have a harmony and a charm, and, where life is enriched by no loftier genius, often make the only difference between its poetry and its prose.—From "*Caxtoniana*," by Lord Lytton.

(b) Day by day, hour by hour, the work goes on—well or ill—to His praise or to His shame. We must build. We are building. We are very apt sometimes to think that we have done nothing, and that that is the worst of it. That is *not* the worst of it. The worst of it is that *we have* done something very poor or very ill. I come home at night, and say, with sad relenting, as the shadows of reflection deepen around me, "I have done nothing at the great building to-day!" O yes, but I have. I have been putting in "the wood, the hay, the stubble," where "the silver and the gold and the precious stones" should have been. I have been piling up fuel for the last fires in my own life. I cannot be a cipher even for one day. I must be a man. Nay, I must be a Christian man, faithful or unfaithful. I must grow, and build, and work, and live in some way. Oh, then, let me see that



I live for Christ, that I grow into His image, and that I work a work in the moral construction of my own life which angels will crown and God will bless!—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) The way to enrich life is to keep a retentive memory in the heart. Look over a period of twenty years, and see the all-covering and ever-shining mercy of God! How many special providences have you observed? How many narrow escapes have you experienced? How many difficulties have you surmounted? How often have you found a pool

in unexpected places? We should lay up some memory of the Divine triumphs which have gladdened our lives, and fall back upon it for inspiration and courage in the dark and cloudy day. Go into your yesterdays to find God! Search for Him in the paths along which you have come, and if you dare, under the teaching of your own memories, deny His goodness, then betake yourselves to the infamous luxury of distrust and reproach.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

### A SONG OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

(Verses 16-20.)

Dean Perowne makes the following remarks concerning this song which Israel sang at Beer:—"The next is a song which was sung on the digging of a well at a spot where they were encamped, and which from this circumstance was called Beër, or 'The Well.' It runs as follows:—

"Spring up, O well! sing ye to it;  
Well, which the princes dug,  
Which the nobles of the people bored  
With the sceptre-of-office, with their  
staves."

This song, first sung at the digging of the well, was afterwards no doubt commonly used by those who came to draw water. The maidens of Israel chanted it to one another, verse by verse, as they toiled at the bucket, and thus beguiled their labour. 'Spring up, O well!' was the burden or refrain of the song, which would pass from one mouth to another at each fresh coil of the rope, till the full bucket reached the well's mouth. But the peculiar charm of the song lies not only in its antiquity, but in the characteristic touch which so manifestly connects it with the life of the time to which the narrative assigns it. The one point which is dwelt upon is, that the leaders of the people took their part in the work, that they themselves helped to dig the well. In the new generation who were about to enter the Land of Promise, a strong feeling of sympathy between the people and their rulers had sprung up,

which augured well for the future, and which left its stamp even on the ballads and songs of the time. This little carol is fresh and lusty with young life; it sparkles like the water of the well whose springing up first occasioned it; it is the expression on the part of those who sung it, of lively confidence in the sympathy and co-operation of their leaders, which, manifested in this one instance, might be relied upon in all emergencies (Ewald, *Gesch.* ii. 264, 5).—*Bibl. Dict.*

Three homiletic points are suggested by the verses under consideration.

#### 1. The needs of human pilgrimage.

The people at Beer wanted water. They were receiving reminders of their dependence almost constantly. It is so with the pilgrimages of human life to-day. We pass from place to place, but we never cease to be dependent. Notice—

1. How *indispensable* are the things which we need! The Israelites wanted water, a thing which is absolutely essential to human existence. We are dependent upon God for many things, both for the body and for the soul, which are thoroughly necessary to our well-being, and even to our life.

2. How *many* are the things which we need! Who could write the catalogue of man's necessities? (a)

3. How *constant* are our needs! We may change our place and our circumstances, but we never change our dependent condition. Both physically and

spiritually we are ever drawing from the fountain of Divine blessings. (*b*)

Our constant dependence should beget constant humility.

II. The Divine provision for the needs of human pilgrimage.

The Divine provision for the Israelites at Beer—

1. *Was promised by God.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Jehovah anticipated the need of His people. "Thou comest to meet him with the blessings of goodness." God designed and promised the provision before it was asked. How munificent is the provision which He makes for the needs of His creatures! (1) In material things. The earth and sea bring forth an abundant supply for the needs of all men. "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (*c*) (2) In spiritual things. "He will abundantly pardon." "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," &c. (Psa. ciii. 3-5, 8). "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," &c. (2 Cor. ix. 8, 11). "The unsearchable riches of Christ." He "is able to do exceeding abundantly," &c. The fountain of Gospel blessings is inexhaustible, infinite. (*d*) And, as in the water of Beer, so also in the blessings of salvation, the provision preceded the need. Redemption was not an afterthought of the Divine mind. The cross was set up in eternity. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

2. *Was bestowed in connection with human effort.* A well was dug under the direction of Moses, who was himself directed by God, and in this way the Lord fulfilled His promise to give them water. God provides for man by means of man's own efforts. If man would obtain temporal blessings, the Divine rule is that he must work for them. "If any man would not work, neither should he eat" (comp. 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. iii. 8-13). In spiritual things also God blesses man by the use of the means of blessing. If we would enjoy the bounteous provision of the Heavenly Father for the supply of our

spiritual needs, we must read, meditate, pray, work, &c.

It is noteworthy that the princes and nobles took a prominent part in the effort to obtain this water (see the remarks of Perowne on this point, quoted above). A glad zeal and a hearty co-operation amongst all ranks seemed to have possessed the people. It is well when the leading people of a community are leaders in excellent service, &c. (*e*)

3. *Enkindled human joy; and this joy was expressed in this song.* The music of our pilgrimage which honours God is that of songs, not dirges. Our glad and grateful anthems are acceptable unto Him. (*f*)

4. *Was suitably commemorated.* The name of the place was called *Beër*, the well. We commemorate our *Marahs*, let us do the same with our *Beërs*. Let us be eager to perpetuate the memory of our mercies.

III. The continuousness of human pilgrimage.

"And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; and from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon." Even scenes of refreshment and joy must not detain them. The well which afforded them so much satisfaction and pleasure was not the goal of their pilgrimage. *Beër* was not Canaan. Onward must they go until they reach the Promised Land. In our life-pilgrimage we may, as it were, halt, but we must not settle in this world. If we attempt to settle here God speedily sends some messenger crying to us, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (*g*)

"Onward then, right onward!  
This our watchword still,  
Till we reach the glory  
Of the wondrous hill.

"On through waste and blackness,  
O'er this desert road:  
On till Salem greets us,  
City of our God."

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Does not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of Divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now exist upon it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) We never wake up in the morning but we want strength for the day, and we never go to bed at night without needing grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life: when we begin with Christ in our young days we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth; in middle life our needs are greater still, lest the cares of this world should eat as doth a canker; and in old age we are needy still, and need preserving grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die we need our last bed to be made for us by mercy, and our last hour to be cheered by grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity we should have no place to dwell in. We are as full of wants as the sea is full of water. We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door, and we must go out a-begging again. Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment, and dog our heels in every place.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) There is not a word on our tongue; there is not a thought in our heart, but lo! O Jesus, Son of man, Thou knowest it *altogether*! And, knowing it, has He left it unprovided for? See what He has done for the recruiting of man's physical strength, and then say if He who can be so careful about restoring the body would leave the recovery of the mind and soul altogether unprovided for. He has answered that every day and eventide. He sends a cooling shadow over the earth, and, as it wraps all things in its darkness, it seems to say, "Rest awhile." See how above every weekday He has set that singing, shining Sabbath Day of His, to quiet men, to give them a moment's rest in the great strife and chase of life! If He has made an evening to each day—a Sabbath to each week—if He has in many ways shown an interest in men's bones, muscles, nerves, and sinews, has He forgotten the immortal soul? has He made no answer to the cry of the heart when it is weary and sad, when it sighs for release and rest? His whole life is an answer to that enquiry. "Come unto Me," said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He meets us, therefore, at every point. He provides for the aching limb, and answers the sigh of the weary heart!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) It is no small task to water one garden, in the heat of the summer time, so that every flower shall be refreshed, and no plant overlooked. How great is the might of Him, who

from the salt sea extracts the precious clouds of sweet rain, to fall not only on gardens, but on the pastures of the wilderness, and the wild forest trees, till all nature laughs for joy, the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands! Brethren, it is a great thing to put a cup of cold water to the lips of a disciple; it shall not lose its reward. To refresh the bowels of one of God's saints is no mean thing; but how great is God's goodness, which puts a cup of salvation to every Christian's lips, which waters every plant of His right hand planting, so that every one can have his leaf continually green, and his fruit ever brought forth in due season.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) For an illustration on the point see p. 13.

(f) It is always a token of a revival of religion, it is said, when there is a revival of psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear ploughmen at the plough-tail singing Luther's psalms. Whitfield and Wesley had never done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry, and for the singing of such men as Toplady, and Scott, and Newton, and many others of the same class; and even now we mark that since there has been somewhat of a religious revival in our denominations, there are more hymn books than ever there were, and far more attention is paid to Christian psalmody than before. When your heart is full of Christ, you will want to sing. It is a blessed thing to sing at your labour and work, if you are in a place where you can do so; and if the world should laugh at you, you must tell them that you have as good a right to sing the songs that delight your heart as they have to sing any of the songs in which their hearts delight. Praise His name, Christians; be not dumb; sing aloud unto Jesus the Lamb; and if as Englishmen can sometimes sing our national air, let us as believers have our national hymn, and sing—

"Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all."

—*Ibid.*

(g) A father with his little son is journeying overland to California; and when, at night, he pitches his tent in some pleasant valley, the child is charmed with the spot, and begs his father to rear a house and remain there; and he begins to make a little fence about the tent, and digs up the wild-flowers, and plants them within the enclosure. But the father says, "No, my son. Our home is far distant. Let these things go; for to-morrow we must depart." Now, God is taking us, His children, as pilgrims and strangers, homewards; but we desire to build here, and must be often overthrown before we can learn to seek the "city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."—*H. W. Beecher.*

A stranger is very well known, not perhaps in the great city where there are always thousands of such, but in a country town or on a



country road. See him as he enters the village at nightfall; you can see at once he is not of the place. The dust is on his raiment; he is footsore and weary; yet he has no mind to stay—he will be away again before the inhabitants are up. His language is different; his questions

are those of one who has but a superficial and momentary interest in the answer that may be given; his very look is the life spelling of the word “onward;” his home, wherever it may be, is not here.—*A. Raleigh, D.D.*

### A SONG AT THE WELLHEAD.

(Verses 16-18.)

I. These people required water as we greatly need grace, and there was a promise given concerning the supply.

“The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

1. The supply promised here *was a Divine supply*. “I will give them water.” . . . . The supply of grace that you are to receive in your time of need is a Divine supply. Hence, knowing the attributes of God, you will understand that however much you may require, there will be an all-sufficient supply; however long you may require it, there will be an everlasting supply; at whatever hours you may want it, there will be an available supply.

2. *It was a suitable supply*. The people were thirsty, and the promise was, “I will give them water.” Like a father, God understands His children better than His children understand themselves, and He gives not according to their foolish guesses of what they need, but according to His wise apprehension of what they require.

3. The supply promised was *an abundant supply*. “I will give them water.” It included every child of Israel, every babe that needed it, as well as every strong man that thirsted after it. No child of God shall be left to perish for want of the necessary supplies.

4. It was *a sure supply*. “I will give them water.” We do not go forward on the strength of “ifs,” and “buts,” and “peradventures;” but we advance confidently, invigorated and inflamed, as to our courage, by “wills” and “shalls.” God must un-deify Himself before He can break His promises.

II. Observe, the song.

The children of Israel sing this song,

“Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.”

1. This song may be looked upon as *the voice of cheerfulness*. There was no water, but they were still in good spirits. Cheerfulness in want, cheerfulness upon the bed of pain, cheerfulness under slander, singing, like the nightingale, in the night, praising God when the thorn is in the breast, this is a high Christian attainment, which we should seek after and not be content without.

2. I like, too, the look of these children of Israel, *singing to the Lord before the water came*, praising Him while they were yet thirsty. Let us pitch a tune and join with them, however low our estate may be.

3. This song was the voice of *cheerfulness sustained by faith*. They believed the promise, “Gather the people together,” &c. They sang the song of expectation. Sing of the mercy yet to come, which your faith can see, although as yet you have not received it.

4. This song was no doubt *greatly increased in its volume, and more elevated in its tone, when the water did begin to spring*. All ye who have received anything of Divine grace, sing ye unto it! Bless God by singing and praising His name while you are receiving His favours.

III. The song was a prayer.

“Spring up, O well,” was Faith’s way of singing her prayer.

1. This prayer *went at once to the work, and sought for that which was required*. What was needed? Not a well, but water. Now what we need is not the means of grace, but the grace of the means. You are retired for your private devotions; you have opened the Bible; you begin to

read. Now, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter. Words are nothing: the letter killeth. The business of the believer with his Bible open is to pray, "Here is the well: spring up, O well; Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of Thy Word," &c. Or perhaps you are about to kneel down to pray. You want in prayer not the well so much as the springing up of the well. And it is just the same when you go to the ordinances. . . . And is it not the same when you come to the public assembly? Let our prayer be like the song of the text, direct and to the point. Lord, do not put me off with the husks of ordinances and means of grace; give me Thyself.

2. *This prayer was the prayer of faith*, like the song. Faith gives wings to our prayers, so that they fly heaven-high; but unbelief clogs and chains our prayers to earth. If you want some well to spring up to supply the needs of yourself and your family, pray in faith; the rock, if needs be, shall flow with rivers of water.

3. It was *united prayer*. All the people prayed, "Spring up, O well!" The prayer was a unanimous one.

IV. Then they went to work.

"I will give them water," but "the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it," &c.

1. When God intends to bless a people, *effort is always esteemed to be honourable*. "The princes digged," &c. They were not ashamed of the work. And when God shall bless a church and people, they must all feel that it is a very great honour to do anything in the service of God. Our highest dignity is to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It was *effort which was accomplished by very feeble means*. They digged the well with their staves—not very first-class tools. But they did as they were told. We must dig as we can. We must use what abilities we have. If you have but one talent, use that one talent.

3. It was *effort in God's order*. They digged the well "by the direction of the lawgiver." We must not forget in everything we do for God, to go to work in God's way.

4. It was *effort made in faith*. They digged the well, but as they digged it they felt so certain that the water would come that they sang at the work, "Spring up, O well!" This is the true way to work if we would get a blessing.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

## THE OVERTHROW OF THE AMORITES; OR, THE DEFEAT OF "THE PEOPLE THAT DELIGHT IN WAR."

(Verses 21-26.)

The following points in this portion of the history may be considered with advantage.

I. A reasonable request preferred.

"And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, let me pass," &c. (vers. 21, 22). The same request was sent by them on a former occasion to the king of Edom (chap. xx. 17). This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself*. "Let me pass through thy land." (On this and the next subdivision see pp. 376, 377.)

2. *Enforced by satisfactory assurances*. "We will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; we will go

along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders."

II. A hostile refusal returned.

"And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together," &c. (ver. 23). The reasons which led the king of the Amorites to adopt this line of action were probably partly those which led the king of the Edomites to oppose their passing through his country; e.g., fear that they should receive some injury from the Israelites if they granted their request, and envy of their growing power (see pp. 376, 377). On receiving the request Sihon gathered his people together, and marched against Israel.

Not content with opposing their march through his territory, "he went out against Israel into the wilderness; and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel." He was the aggressor in the war; and his assault was entirely unprovoked. It is an evil thing when kings and their advisers are so eager to make war. (a)

III. An unprovoked assault ending in an unmitigated defeat.

"And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land," &c. (vers. 24, 25). If, like one in modern times, Sihon entered upon the conflict "with a light heart," he soon exchanged it for a heavy and bitter heart. The battle was his last. He and all his host were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." His defeat and destruction were a just retribution for his unprovoked and hasty assault upon Israel. (b)

IV. A great victory obtained by those who had in vain asked for a small favour.

Israel had asked as a favour that they might be allowed to pass through

the land of the Amorites, who in reply went out to war against them; "and Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok," &c. Their modest request for permission to pass through the land was brutally refused, and, now having been forced into battle, they take possession of the land as their own. Moderation of request or demand is far more likely to be followed by large attainments than unreasonable requests or extravagant demands. An attitude of bluster and swagger generally leads to defeat and humiliation.

V. A territory which had been obtained by conquest lost by defeat.

"For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon." A policy of aggression often leads to enforced retrogression. That which has been obtained by force is often lost by reason of the opposition of a superior force. Righteous and beneficent government is the best security of an empire. (c)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,  
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well

To extort their truncheons from the puny hands  
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds  
Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,  
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.

—*Cowper.*

(b) Moses sent messengers unto Sihon, desiring that he would grant his army a passage, upon what security he should please to require; he promised that he should be no way injured, neither as to that country which Sihon governed, nor as to its inhabitants; and that he would buy his provisions at such a price as should be to their advantage, even though he should desire to sell them their very water. But Sihon refused his offer, and put his army into battle array, and was preparing everything in order to hinder their passing over Arnon.

When Moses saw that the Amorite king was disposed to enter upon hostilities with them, he thought he ought not to bear that insult; and, determining to wean the Hebrews from their indolent temper, and prevent the disorders which arose thence, which had been the occasion of their former sedition (nor indeed were they

now thoroughly easy in their minds), he inquired of God, whether he would give him leave to fight? which when he had done, and God also promised him the victory, he was himself very courageous, and ready to proceed to fighting. Accordingly he encouraged the soldiers; and he desired of them that they would take the pleasure of fighting, now God gave them leave so to do. They then upon the receipt of this permission, which they so much longed for, put on their whole armour, and set about the work without delay. But the Amorite king was not now like to himself when the Hebrews were ready to attack him; but both he himself was affrighted at the Hebrews, and his army, which before had showed themselves to be of good courage, were then found to be timorous: so they could not sustain the first onset, nor bear up against the Hebrews, but fled away, as thinking this would afford them a more likely way for their escape than fighting; for they depended upon their cities, which were strong, from which yet they reaped no advantage when they were forced to fly to them; for as soon as the Hebrews saw them giving ground, they immediately pursued them close; and when they had broken their ranks, they greatly terrified them, and some of



them broke off from the rest, and ran away to the cities. Now the Hebrews pursued them briskly, and obstinately persevered in the labours they had already undergone; and being very skilful in slinging, and very dexterous in throwing of darts, or anything else of that kind; and also having nothing but lightarmour, which made them quick in the pursuit, they overtook their enemies; and for those that were most remote, and could not be overtaken, they reached them by their slings and their bows, so that many were slain; and those that escaped the slaughter were sorely wounded, and these were more distressed with thirst than with any of those that fought against them, for it was the summer season; and when the greatest number of them were brought down to the river out of a desire to drink, as also when others fled away by troops, the Hebrews came round them, and shot at them; so that, what with darts and what with arrows, they made a slaughter of them all. Sihon their king was also slain. So the Hebrews spoiled the dead bodies, and took their prey. The land also which they took was full of abundance of fruits, and the army went all over it without fear, and fed their cattle upon it; and they took the enemies prisoners, for they could no way put a stop to them, since all the fighting

men were destroyed. Such was the destruction which overtook the Amorites, who were neither sagacious in counsel, nor courageous in action. Hereupon the Hebrews took possession of their land, which is a country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembling an island: the river Arnon being its southern limit; the river Jabbok determining its northern side, which, running into the Jordan, loses its own name, and takes the other; while Jordan itself runs along by it on its western coast.—*Josephus, Ant. v. 5.*

(c) There is one thing too apt to be forgotten, which it much behoves us to remember: in the Colonies, as everywhere else in this world, the vital point is not who decides, but what is decided on! That measures tending really to the best advantage, temporal and spiritual, of the Colony be adopted, and strenuously put in execution; there lies the grand interest of every good citizen, British and Colonial. Such measures, whosoever have originated and prescribed them, will gradually be sanctioned by all men and gods; and clamours of every kind in reference to them may safely to a great extent be neglected, as clamorous merely, and sure to be transient.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

## LESSONS FROM AN ANCIENT WAR SONG.

(Verses 27-32.)

For the interpretation of these verses see *Explanatory and Critical Notes.*

These verses suggest reflections on—

### I. The triumphs of warriors.

1. *Their selfishness.* "Come ye to Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and established." Warriors think only of their own cities and of the interests of their own country and people; to secure these they do not hesitate to outrage the most sacred rights of other peoples. (a)

2. *Their destructiveness.* "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it hath consumed Ar of Moab." (b)

3. *Their cruelty.* "It hath consumed the lords of the high places of Arnon." (c).

### II. The vanity of idols.

"Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh! he hath given up his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, unto Sihon king of the Amorites." Chemosh, the

national god of the Moabites, in whom they trusted, failed to deliver them from the power of the Amorites (comp. Psa. cxxxv. 15-18; Isa. xlv. 9-20). An illustration of every object in which man reposes his supreme trust, except the Lord God. The idols of our age and country are wealth, power, pleasure, friendship, knowledge, wisdom; excellent things in themselves and in their place; but utterly vain when pursued and trusted as the chief good of man. They cannot deliver in the day of trouble, &c. Only God is worthy of our entire and unlimited confidence.

### III. The discomfiture of conquerors.

"We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba . . . . And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there." The Amorites had vanquished the

Moabites and seized much of their territory; they also went out against Israel; but now Israel has vanquished them and taken their territory. The victor is now vanquished; the spoiler is now spoiled. How often has this been repeated in subsequent times! What

a striking illustration we have of it in Napoleon Bonaparte! (d)

IV. The insecurity of earthly possessions.

"Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." "Worldly inheritances are continually changing their masters."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The spirit of all rulers and nations towards foreign states is partial, unjust. Individuals may be disinterested; but nations have no feeling of the tie of brotherhood to their race. A base selfishness is the principle on which the affairs of nations are commonly conducted. A statesman is expected to take advantage of the weaknesses and wants of other countries. How loose a morality governs the intercourse of states! What falsehoods and intrigues are licensed by diplomacy! What nation regards another with true friendship? What nation makes sacrifices to another's good? What nation is as anxious to perform its duties, as to assert its rights? What nation chooses to suffer wrong rather than inflict it? What nation lays down the everlasting law of right, casts itself fearlessly on its principles, and chooses to be poor or to perish rather than to do wrong? Can communities so selfish, so unfriendly, so unprincipled, so unjust, be expected to wage righteous wars? Especially if with this selfishness are joined national prejudices, antipathies, and exasperated passions, what else can be expected in the public policy but inhumanity and crime? An individual, we know, cannot be trusted in his own cause to measure his own claims, to avenge his own wrongs; and the civil magistrate, an impartial umpire, has been substituted as the only means of justice. But nations are even more unfit than individuals to judge in their own cause; more prone to push their rights to excess, and to trample on the rights of others; because nations are crowds, and crowds are unruled by opinion, and more easily inflamed by sympathy into madness. Is there not, then, always a presumption against the justice of war?—*W. E. Channing, D.D.*

(b) Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villagers in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathise with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of Heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants

flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

(c) You may see what war is, as you mark tens and hundreds of thousands of men, made after the image of God, rushing together to tear and destroy each other with more than the fury of wild beasts. You may see what it is in the miserable crowds of innocent men, women, and children that are flying from their homes to perish, in too many instances, by famine, and the pestilence which famine breeds. You may see what it is, in devastated fields, where the bounty of Providence had blessed man with abundance, which now lies trampled into the mire, or remains rotting and ungathered, because the tide of war has rolled over the country. You will see what it is, in the bombarded towns, in the sacked and desolate houses, in the burned and battered villages, where a few of the unfortunate inhabitants may be seen prowling like famished wolves amid the ruins of their homes, to see if they can pick some morsel of food to save themselves from starvation. You may see what it is, in the heaps of decaying human corpses that taint the air with corruption, or are eaten by dogs which won't be scared away from their loathsome feast. You may see what it is, in the still sadder spectacle of scores and hundreds of wounded men lying for hours and days where they fell, with no eye to pity and no hand to succour, and sometimes slain in their wounds by men worse than wild beasts, who haunt the battle-field for plunder and spoil. You may hear what war is in the wild cry of vengeance and fury, more terrible than the howl of the wolf or the roar of the lion as he springs on his prey, with which men hurl themselves into deadly strife; in the groans of the wounded, as they lie, mercilessly trampled beneath the feet of their comrades or the prancing hoofs of horses that rush over them unheeded; in the shrieks of women, rushing with dishevelled hair and eyes starting out of their sockets in the agony of terror, as they see

from outrage worse than death before the face of brutal soldiers, drunk with blood and lust; in the piteous wails of little infants tossed on the points of bayonets, or nailed alive to the doors of their parents' houses. This is war. Yes; this is war. It is not the minister of justice; it is not the redresser of wrong; it is not the vindicator of right. To borrow Coleridge's words:—

"War is a monster all with blood defiled,  
That from the aged father tears his child:  
A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,

Who slays the sire and starves the son,  
The husband slays, and from her hoard  
Steals what his widow's toil hath won.  
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away  
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day."

—Henry Richard.

(d) Where is the man at whose nod nations lately trembled, at whose pleasure kings held their thrones, and whose voice, more desolating

than the whirlwind, directed the progress of ravaging armies? A little island now holds this conqueror of the world. No crowd is there to do him homage. His ear is no longer soothed with praise. The glare which power threw around him is vanished. The terror of his name is past. His abject fall has even robbed him of that admiration which is sometimes forced upon us by the stern, proud spirit, which adversity cannot subdue. Contempt and pity are all the tribute he now receives from the world he subdued. If we can suppose that his life of guilt has left him any moral feeling, what anguish must he carry into the silence and solitude to which he is doomed. From the fields of battle which he has strewn with wounded and slain, from the kingdoms and families which he has desolated; the groans of the dying, the curses of the injured, the wailing of the bereaved, must pierce his retreat, and overwhelm him with remorse and agony.  
—W. E. Channing, D.D.

## THE BATTLE OF EDREI, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

(Verses 33-35.)

We have here an illustration of the following great truths—

I. The Christian has to contend against a most formidable adversary.

"Og the king of Bashan and all his people" were a most powerful enemy to encounter. Many of their "cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars." The message of Jehovah unto Moses, "Fear him not," &c., implies that the Israelites were deeply sensible that they were about to encounter a powerful antagonist. In battling against evil the Christian has to do with a mighty foe. Thoughtless persons may speak lightly of the vitality and strength of evil; but no one who has ever earnestly contended with it can do so. See St. Paul's estimate of it (Eph. vi. 10-18). And St. Peter's (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). And St. Jude's (Jude 3, 20-24). The formidableness of the adversary of the Christian may be seen as regards,—

1. *Sin in ourselves.* The complete victory of the Christian life often involves painful and protracted warfare (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; 2 Cor. ix. 3-5; Heb. xii. 1-4). (a)

2. *Evil in the world.* Think of the moral darkness and death in heathen

lands; and in our own country, of the criminal classes; of the multitudes who, though not criminal, are irreligious; of the drunkenness, the commercial dishonesty, the social corruptions, the religious formality, &c. Let any one attempt to grapple with any one of these forms of evil, and he will need no argument to convince him that true Christians are battling against a mighty adversary. (b)

II. The Christian in his conflict is inspired with the most encouraging assurance.

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Fear him not;" &c. It has been well pointed out in the *Biblical Museum*, that "they were likely to fear, since—1. They had before them a powerful foe, warlike and well posted; 2. They were weakened by previous battles; 3. They had enemies behind and before them." And we know as a matter of fact that they did fear the encounter. "The giant stature of Og, and the power and bravery of his people, excited a dread which God Himself alleviated by His encouragement to Moses before the battle, and the memory of this victory lingered long in the national memory (Ps. cxxxv. 11; cxxxvi. 20)." The encouragement given to Israel illus-



trates that which is given to Christians in their conflict with evil. Notice—

1. *The assurance.* "I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land." Christians are assured of victory over sin (comp. John xvi. 33; Rom. viii. 35-39; xvi. 20; 1 John iv. 4; v. 4, 5). (c)

2. *The example.* "Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon, king of the Amorites," &c. Past victories should inspire us with courage and fortitude in present conflicts (comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 34-37; 2 Tim iv. 17, 18). (d)

3. *The exhortation.* "Fear him not." Enforced by such an assurance from such a Being, and by so recent and striking an example, this exhortation must have carried with it great power. Christian soldier, "fear not! for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

III. The Christian in his conflict shall obtain a most complete victory.

"So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people," &c. This illustrates the Christian victory in at least two respects:—

1. *The destruction of their enemies.* The Christian shall be victorious over evil in himself. He shall be presented "faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And the Christian cause shall triumph in the world. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under His feet." "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

2. *Their enrichment by the destruction of their enemies.* "And they possessed his land." "All the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took a prey to ourselves" (Deut. iii. 7). So Christians "are more than conquerors through Him that loved" them. The Christian is a gainer by reason of his moral battles; he comes out of the conflict greatly enriched with the most precious spiritual spoils. His wisdom, his strength, his courage, the very noblest qualities of his manhood, are all increased and perfected in the arduous strife with sin.

Christian soldiers, onward bravely to the battle, and quail not in its fiercest strife; for through the Captain of your salvation, a splendid triumph shall be yours. (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When men are swimming with the tide, how easy it is! They seem to themselves, oh! how lithe and springy. But let them turn round and attempt to swim back, and they will find that it is quite a different matter. There is many and many a man whose conviction of danger comes with his attempt to turn back on habit.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease, wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them; the dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood, these are for those who go a soldiering; and swords all hacked, and dented armour, and bruised shields, these are the things that mark the good, the practical soldier. Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a life-work for Christ, actually to win souls, this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian. A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night perhaps the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle, just at the time when he is most weary, and he must away to the attack just when he would

best prefer to take his rest in sleep. The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country; always needing to stand on his watch-tower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood, with far worse foes, namely, with spiritual wickednesses in high places.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The fight may seem to hang in the scales to-day, but the conquest is sure to come unto Him whose right it is. He shall gather all the sceptres of kings beneath his arm in one mighty sheaf, and take their diadems from off their brows, and be Himself crowned with many crowns, for God hath said it, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but every promise of His must and shall be fulfilled. Push on, then, through hosts of enemies, ye warriors of the Cross. Fight up the hill, ye soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust. Ye may not see your banner just now, neither do ye hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away, and you shall gain the summit of the hill, and your foes shall fly before you, and the King Himself shall come, and you shall be rewarded who have continued steadfast in His service.—*Ibid.*

(d) The desert was to Christ a holy place,

after the initial battle; the sight of the old footmarks inspired His depressed heart; the echoes of the victorious quotations became as voices of promise. In the first instance, He was led up of the Spirit to be tempted: often afterwards He was led up of the Spirit into the same wilderness to be comforted. So all through human life; recollection becomes inspiration, and memory speaks to the soul like a prophet of the Lord—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 407.

Sir Francis Drake, being in a dangerous storm in the Thames, was heard to say, "Must I, who have escaped the rage of the ocean, be drowned in a ditch!" Will you, experienced saints, who have passed through a world of tribulation, lie down and die of despair, or give up your profession because you are at the present moment passing through some light affliction? Let your past preservation inspire you with courage and constrain you to brave all storms for Jesus' sake.—*C. H. Sourceon.*

(e) Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed through out the world. The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb; the swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords. What! soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory, wouldst thou have it said that thou didst turn thy back in the day of battle? Dost thou not wish to have a share in the conflict, that thou mayest have a share in the victory? If thou hast even the hottest part of the battle, wilt thou flinch and fly? Thou shalt have the brightest part of the victory if thou art in the fiercest of the conflict. Wilt thou turn and lose thy laurels? Wilt thou throw down thy sword? Shall it be with thee as when a standard-bearer fainteth? Nay, man, up to arms again! for the victory is certain. Though the conflict be severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, ye lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more! for ye shall yet be crowned with immortal glory.—*Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the last division of this Book, which comprises fifteen chapters (xxii.-xxxvi.).

"In the steppes of Moab the Israelites encamped upon the border of the Promised Land, from which they were only separated by the Jordan. But before this boundary line could be passed, there were many preparations that had to be made. In the first place, the whole congregation was to pass through a trial of great importance to all future generations, as bearing upon the relation in which it stood to the heathen world; and in the second place, it was here that Moses, who was not to enter Canaan because of his sin at the water of strife, was to bring the work of legislation to a close before his death, and not only to issue the requisite instructions concerning the conquest of the promised inheritance, and the division of it among the tribes of Israel, but to impress once more upon the hearts of the whole congregation the essential contents of the whole law, with all that the Lord had done for Israel, that they might be confirmed in their fidelity to the Lord, and pre-

served from the danger of apostasy. This last work of the faithful servant of God, with which he brought his mediatorial work to a close, is described in the book of Deuteronomy; whilst the laws relating to the conquest and partition of Canaan, with the experience of Israel in the steppes of Moab, fill up the latter portion of the present book."—*Keil and Del.*

In this and the succeeding two chapters we have the record of Balaam and his prophecies.

Verse 1. "*The plains.* Heb. *araboth*; the word is the plural of that which is used to denote the whole depressed tract along the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and onward, where it is still called the Arabah, to the Elanitic gulf. Near the mouth of the Jordan this tract is about eleven miles across, a breadth of from four to five miles being on the eastern bank. The space occupied by the Israelitish camp consisted, in the main, of a large and luxuriant oasis upon this bank, slightly raised above the barren flat, sultry because sheltered by the Peraean hills which bear up the fertile plateau above, and watered by

the brooks which, descending from those hills, run westward across the plain into the Jordan (see Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' pp. 528 sqq.).—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Plains of Moab*: See on xxi. 20.

*On this side Jordan by Jericho.* Keil and Del. translate, "Beyond the Jordan of Jericho."

Verse 2. *Balak* = waster, destroyer.—*Fuerst.*

*Zippor* = a bird.

Verse 3. "Was distressed because of." Lit. 'shrank from before them' in terror.—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 4. *Midian*. "The Midianites, who are referred to here, must be distinguished from the branch of the same tribe which dwelt in the peninsula of Sinai (chap. x. 29, 30; Exod. ii. 15, 16; iii. 1). They had been settled for a long time (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 35) on the eastern border of the Moabitish and Amoritish territory, in a grassy but treeless steppe-land—where many ruins and wells are still to be found belonging to very ancient times—and lived by grazing (chap. xxxi. 32, sqq.) and the caravan trade. They were not very warlike, and were not only defeated by the Edomites (Gen. xxxvi. 35), but were also subdued and rendered tributary by Sihon, king of the Amorites."—*Keil and Del.*

"The elders of Midian are heads of tribes who administered the general affairs of the people, who, like the Israelites, lived under a patriarchal constitution. The most powerful of them bore the title of 'kings' (chap. xxxi. 8) or 'princes' (Josh. xiii. 21).—*Ibid.*

Verse 5. *Balaam* = "devourer of the people" (*Hengstenberg*); or, "one not belonging to the people, i.e., a foreigner; or, conqueror, corrupter of the people."—*Fuerst.*

*Beor* is regarded by many as derived from  $\text{בִּעַר}$ , to burn, to consume.

*Fuerst* says it signifies shepherd, and is from  $\text{רֹעֶה}$ , cattle. In 2 Pet. ii. 15 the name is written Bosor.

"*Pethor, which is by the river, &c.* Rather, 'which was on the river' (i.e., the Euphrates, so called here and elsewhere by pre-eminence) 'in his native land.'—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Pethor* was a city of Mesopotamia (Deut. xxiii. 4) on the Euphrates. Its site is unknown.

Verse 7. *Rewards of divination.* "The soothsayers' wages" (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 15).

Verse 15. *Princes, more, and more honourable*; i.e., more in number and of more exalted rank, and with more splendid presents or proffers of reward.

Verse 36. *A city of Moab.* Heb., *Ir-Moab*. See on chap. xxi. 15.

Verse 39. *Kirjath-huzoth*. Margin: "a city of streets." *Fuerst*: "city of the steppes." From the context, it was "apparently within Balak's dominions, and therefore south of the Arnon. Hardly however far south, for from it, on the morrow, the company proceeded to Bamoth-Baal, which lay north of the Arnon. It was probably a place of importance, and possibly that of Balak's residence. . . . All the conditions implied as to the site of Kirjath-huzoth in the Scriptural notice of it are satisfied by the ruins of Shihân, four miles west by south of the site assigned to Ar or Ir. They stand on a slight but insulated eminence, and form a conspicuous object to all the country round."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 41. *The high places of Baal*; or, Bamoth-Baal. See on xxi. 19.

The utmost part of the people; or, "the end of the people," i.e., the outermost portion of the camp of Israel. Balak seems to have thought that Balaam must have the Israelites in view to curse them effectually.



# PILGRIMS NEARING HOME.

## (Verse 1.)

The Israelites have now ended their wanderings. They have encamped for the last time. When they strike their tents again it will be to march forward towards the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Viewing them in their present position, we regard them as an illustration of the Christian approaching the end of his pilgrimage. There is an analogy in the following particulars. The Christian as he draws near to the end of his pilgrimage,—

### I. Is cheered by delightful prospects.

From their present encampment the Israelites could behold the land promised to their fathers. They looked forward to—

1. *Rest from their toils and wanderings.* The Christian nearing home anticipates rest from sin and sorrow, from toil and trial, from doubt and fear. Soon they shall “rest from their labours,” &c. (a)

2. *Possession of the inheritance.* The “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” will soon be entered upon by the Christian who has the end of his journey in view.

3. *The realisation of precious and long-cherished hopes.* For generations past the noblest of the Israelites had been animated by the hope of the possession of Canaan; and now that hope is on the point of fruition. The Christian hopes for freedom from sin, for holiness, for likeness to Christ, for the vision of God (1 John iii. 2, 3); and as he nears the bourne of his pilgrimage the realisation of these splendid hopes comes into clear and clearer view. Most brilliant and blessed are his prospects. (b)

II. Needs preparation for the new state into which he is about to enter.

In this encampment in the plains of Moab much preparatory work had to be done amongst the Israelites before they could advance to the possession of Canaan. This preparatory work is narrated in the last eleven chapters of

this book, and in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses completed his work as legislator for them, gave them directions as to the conquest and division of the land, took great pains to guard them against apostasy, to confirm them in their covenant relation to God, and to strengthen their loyalty to Him. And as the Christian approaches the end of his pilgrimage, the progress of his preparation for heaven is often manifest to the spiritual observer. His increasing meetness for his inheritance may be seen in the beautiful ripening of his character, which grows rich and mellow. His life becomes luminous with fore-gleamings of the great glory to which he approaches. Gradually he is “made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (c)

III. Is still subjected to trials and difficulties.

While encamped in the plains of Moab, and before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites experienced—

1. *Perilous temptations.* In the twenty-fifth chapter we have an account of temptations arising from their association with idolatrous peoples and practices, to which great numbers of the Israelites yielded. The true child of God is sometimes sorely tempted and tried, even when he has the heavenly Canaan within his view.

2. *Painful separations.* Their great emancipator and leader, “Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab. . . . And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days.” And the aged pilgrim nearing the end of his course often experiences painful separations. The dear partner of his life is perhaps summoned home before him, leaving him to finish his journey alone in weariness and sorrow. The end of the pilgrimage always involves separations, and very often trying ones.

3. *Formidable difficulties.* Jordan had to be crossed before the Israelites

entered into Canaan. And death is an experience which must be passed through by the Christian pilgrim before he gains the heavenly rest; and to some this is a source of great anxiety and trial. (d)

Ye aged pilgrims, and ye who by

reason of sickness or weakness are nearing home, be of good cheer, for your heavenly inheritance is at hand. Be ye also diligent that when the summons to arise and depart is given to you, ye may be ready joyfully to obey it.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) O weary sons and daughters of Adam! you will not have to drive the ploughshare into the unthankful soil in heaven; you will not need to rise to daily toil before the sun hath risen, and labour still when the sun hath long ago gone to his rest; but ye shall be still, ye shall be quiet, ye shall rest yourselves. Toil, trouble, travail, and labour are words that cannot be spelled in heaven; they have no such things there; for they always rest.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) I do not know a more beautiful sight to be seen on earth than a man who has served the Lord for many years, and who, having grown grey in service, feels that in the order of nature he must soon be called home. He is rejoicing in the first-fruits of the Spirit which he has obtained, but he is panting after the full harvest of the Spirit which is guaranteed to him. I think I see him sitting on a jutting crag by the edge of Jordan, listening to the harpers on the other side, and waiting till the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern, and the spirit shall depart to God that made it. A wife waiting for her husband's footsteps; a child waiting in the darkness of the night till its mother comes to give it the evening kiss, are portraits of our waiting. It is a pleasant and precious thing so to wait and so to hope.—*Ibid.*

During the last days of that eminent man of God, Dr. Payson, he once said, "When I formerly read Bunyan's description of the land of Beulah, where the sun shines and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there was such a place; but now my own experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions." The best possible commentary on the glowing descriptions in Bunyan is to be found in that very remarkable letter dictated by Dr. Payson to his sister a few weeks before his death. "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The Celestial city is full in my view. Its glories have been upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of Death, which now appears but an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He

approached, and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this blessed brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."—*George B. Cheever, D.D.*

(c) Am I nearer heaven? then I will be doing more of the work which I shall do in heaven. I shall soon use the harp: let me be carefully tuning it: let me rehearse the hymns which I shall sing before the throne; for if the words in heaven shall be sweeter and more rich than any that poets can put together here, yet the essential song of heaven shall be the same as that which we present to Jehovah here below:

"They praise the Lamb in hymns above,  
And we in hymns below."

The essence of their praise is gratitude that He should bleed: it is the essence of our praise too. They bless Immanuel's name for undeserved favours bestowed upon unworthy ones, and we do the same. My aged brethren, I congratulate you, for you are almost home: be yet more full of praise than ever. Quickened your footsteps as the glory land shines more brightly. You are close to the gate of pearl; sing on, dear brother, though infirmities increase, and let the song grow sweeter and louder until it melts into the infinite harmonies.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) In itself, death is the self-same thing to the righteous as to the wicked. It is the same painful, convulsive separation between soul and body, sometimes attended with greater suffering, sometimes with less, but always constituting the supreme last strife of agony endurable in this mortal tenement. . . .

Some wicked men have suffered much less in dying than some righteous men. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." It would be interesting to draw a comparison between the deaths and the death-beds of a number of the most remarkable wicked men, with an equal number of the most remarkable righteous men. The circumstances of disease, of mere material evil, are much the same, except that as material evils, they are always aggravated by spiritual distress; the pangs of conscience giving sharpness to the pangs of dissolving nature. Compare even the death-

beds of Hume, Voltaire, and Paine, with those of Edwards, Brainard, Henry Martyn and Payson, and you will find that there is not much to choose as to the physical pain of dying. Take the deaths of Herod and of Paul, the one eaten of worms, consumed inwardly, and the last in all probability crucified, and there was about as much physical suffering in the one death as in the other. Take the deaths of Nero and of John, the one is a sui-

cide, the last dying quietly at a hundred years of age; the pangs of dissolution in both cases were probably very nearly equal. The death of the righteous is no more exempt from physical distress and suffering than that of the wicked.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

For another illustration see the description of Christian and Hopeful passing through the river of Death in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

## NEEDLESS ALARM.

(Verses 2-4.)

### I. This alarm was great.

“Moab was sore afraid of the people, and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.” “As the Israelites passed by the eastern border of the land of Moab, the Moabites did not venture to make any attack upon them; on the contrary, they supplied them with bread and water for money (Deut. ii. 29). At that time they no doubt cherished the hope that Sihon, their own terrible conqueror, would be able with perfect ease either to annihilate this new foe, or to drive them back into the desert from which they had come. But when they saw this hope frustrated, and the Israelites had overthrown the two kings of the Amorites with victorious power, and had conquered their kingdoms, and pressed forward through what was formerly Moabitish territory, even to the banks of the Jordan, the close proximity of so powerful a foe filled Balak, their king, with terror and dismay, so that he began to think of the best means of destroying them,” *Keil and Del.* To go out and fight against them, to attempt to oppose their progress by force, were projects which could not be entertained even for a moment by the Moabites. They shrank from before them in extreme alarm.

### II. This alarm seemed to be justified.

The historian mentions three things as giving rise to the terror of the Moabites.

1. *The number of the Israelites.* “Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many.” The number of men, “from twenty years old and up-

wards, able to go to war in Israel,” was at this time about 601,730 (chap. xxvi. 51), not including the Levites.

2. *The needs of the Israelites.* “And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.” The idea seems to be that so great a multitude would have great needs, and with their great power would seize and entirely consume all the possessions of the Moabites and the Midianites. The Israelites “seemed able to eat up the Moabites, to consume their towns, to possess their substance, and to take both their cities and substance into their own hands.”

3. *The deeds of the Israelites.* “Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.” They had conquered completely the former conqueror of the Moabites; how, then, could they expect to stand before them? It is probable that they had also heard of “the supernatural might of the people of God,” of the wonders which He had wrought for them, and this increased their terror by reason of them.

### III. This alarm led to the formation of an alliance against Israel.

The Moabites induced their neighbours, the Midianites, to make common cause with them against the people who seemed such a dangerous foe to both of them. In this we have an illustration of many alliances which have been entered into against the cause and people of God. “Notwithstanding the differences and divisions amongst the



enemies of God and His truth, they can join hand in hand together to oppress the Church." We have illustrations of this in Judg. vi. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 1; Psa. lxxxiii. 5-8; Matt. xxii. 15, 16; Luke xxiii. 12; Acts iv. 27; vi. 9; xvii. 18.

#### IV. This alarm was needless.

"There was no ground for such alarm, as the Israelites, in consequence of Divine instructions (Deut. ii. 9), had offered no hostilities to the Moabites, but had conscientiously spared their territory and property; and even after the defeat of the Amorites, had not turned their arms against them, but had advanced to the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan."

We may regard this as an illustration of—

1. *The groundless fears of the good.* Thus "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." And the disciples of Christ "cried out for fear," when Jesus came to them walking on the sea. (a)

But the terror of the Moabites more appropriately illustrates—

2. *The groundless alarms of the wicked.* "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth."

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;  
The thief doth fear each bush an officer."  
—Shakespeare.

"The evil man feareth oftentimes where no fear is, trembling at the fall of a leaf, starting at his own thought, and shaking at his own shadow." "Conscience before sin committed, is a bridle to keep us from it, but when it is committed, a most sharp scourge and whip." (b)

#### Lessons.

1. *It is not always well to judge by appearances.* In this respect the Moabites erred. (c)

2. *No alliance can prevail against the cause of God.*

3. *The infallible antidote against alarm is firm faith in God* (comp. Psa. lvi. 3, 11; cxii. 7).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I remember, when a boy, reading a story of a traveller, who arrived in the dusk of the evening at a place where two roads met, and was greatly alarmed by what appeared to him, at a distance, to be a frightful ghost, dressed in white, with arms extended, ready to seize him in his frightful embrace. Cautiously advancing, however, he soon discovered that what appeared to be a terrible monster, ready to clutch him, was only a *guide-board* to direct him on his journey. Such are the afflictions that often befall us in this life. Seen at a distance, in the feeble light of our dim faith, they are frightful apparitions that alarm and terrify us; but, in the event, they prove so many friendly guide-boards, that a wise and gracious Providence has placed by the way-side, to guide us on to glory.—*Anon.*

It often happens that the coming of Christ to His disciples, for their relief, is that which frightens them most, because they do not know the extent of God's wardrobe; for I think that as a king might never wear the same garment but once, in order to show his riches and magnificence, so God comes to us in all exigencies, but never twice alike. He sometimes puts on the garments of trouble; and when we are calling upon Him as though He were yet in heaven, He is walking by our side; and that from which we are praying God to deliver us is often but God Himself. Thus it is with

us as with children who are terrified by their dreams in the night, and scream for their parents, until, fully waking, behold, they are in their parent's arms.—*H. W. Beecher.*

In regard to these temptations, Bunyan was sometimes just like a scared child that thinks it sees a ghost, or like a timid person in a wood by twilight, that sees in the stump of a tree a man crouched and lying in wait, and instead of daring to go boldly up to it to see what it is, stands shivering and almost dead with terror. Who has not realized this in his own experience, timid or brave? And just so Bunyan did not dare to go up to and examine and look in the face of the shocking blasphemies, accusations, and wrathful passages that Satan would be ever thrusting into his soul; but went cowering and shivering and bowed down as a man in chains under the weight of them. There was a time when all that Satan said to him he seemed morbidly inclined to take upon trust; and if it were a fiery passage of God's Word, so much the worse; for instead of coming up to it as a child of God to see what it was, and whether it were really against him, he fled from it at once as from the fiery flaming sword in the gate of Eden. And nothing can be more curious, more graphic, more affecting in its interest, more childlike in its simplicity, than the manner in which Bunyan describes the commencement and

progress of his recovery out of this state of condemnation and terror: how timidly and cautiously, and as it were by stealth, he began to look these dreadful passages in the face when they had ceased pursuing him, standing at first afar off, and gazing at them, and then, as a child that cannot get rid of its fear, slowly drawing near, and at length daring to touch them, and to walk around them, and to see their true position and meaning, but always conscious of their awful power.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

(b) However vauntingly men may bear themselves in the hour of prosperous villainy, proofs enough have existed of the fears of guilt, when the hour of calamity approaches. Why did our first parents hide themselves after their sin, when they heard the voice of the Lord in the garden? Why did Cain alarm himself at being pursued by the people of the earth? Why shrunk Belshazzar from the handwriting on the wall? Adam had before heard the voice of the Lord, and trembled not: Cain knew that no witness of the murder of his brother existed: Belshazzar understood not the meaning of the writing upon the wall:—and yet they all, after the commission of their several deeds of sin, trembled at the voices that were heard, and the signs that were about. Whence, then, was this? It was because conscience told them, that there is an Eye to which all hearts are open, and whis-

pered the important truth, which has since been proclaimed aloud to all the world, that doubtless there "is a God that judgeth in the earth."—*Matheo.*

What a state is guilt,  
When everything alarms it! Like a sentinel  
Who sleeps upon his watch, it wakes in dread  
E'en at a breath of wind.  
When apprehension can form naught but fears,  
And we distrust security itself.—*W. Havard.*

(c) I remember well, one night, having been preaching the Word in a country village, I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath. I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed, when of a surety I saw something standing in the hedge ghastly, giantlike, and with outstretched arms. Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural; here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit. I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage, and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge. I jumped the ditch, and found myself grasping an old tree, which some waggish body had taken pains to colour with a little whitewash, with a view to frighten simpletons. That old tree has served me a good turn full often.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

## BALAK'S FIRST APPLICATION TO BALAAM: MAN AND THE SUPERNATURAL

(Verses 5-14.)

Here we have the beginning of the action arising from the alliance between Moab and Midian against Israel. "Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike," the Moabites felt that it would be in vain to contend with them while they so manifestly enjoyed the blessing and protection of a mighty God. But they did think that it might be possible to withdraw or neutralize the force of that advantage, by laying upon them the heavy ban of some powerful magician; and by having them thus rendered weak as other men, they might be assailed with every prospect of success. It must have been a great recommendation of the design to them, that the result would enable them to recover the territory that had once been theirs, but which the Israelites now held by right of conquest from the Amorites. Indeed, could the Israelites be extermi-

nated, or driven back into the desert, the children of Lot might well calculate on not only recovering what they had lost, but on adding the rich lands of Argob and Bashan, which the Israelites had won from Og, to their former territories; and they would thus, with some allied tribes of Abrahamic origin, become the sole possessors of the whole country east of the Jordan."—*Kitto.* With these views they sent to Balaam, a celebrated soothsayer, requesting him to come and curse Israel. In this portion of the history we have the following instructive themes for meditation—

### I. Men in difficulty seeking supernatural help.

"Balak sent messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor," &c. (vers. 5-7). This action manifests the belief that Balaam wielded supernatural powers. "It was supposed that prophets and sorcerers

had a power to curse persons and places so as to confound all their designs, frustrate their counsels, enervate their strength, and fill them with fear, terror, and dismay." (a)

1. *There is a measure of truth in this.* It is true that men have had power granted them to curse others. We have examples of this in Gen. ix. 25; Josh. vi. 26; 2 Kings ii. 24. It is probable that Balaam had this power. It is also true that when natural resources are unavailing, under certain circumstances and conditions man may obtain supernatural aid. The godly man may obtain such aid by means of prayer to God.

2. *There is much error in the views under consideration.* It was utterly erroneous to suppose that Balaam, or any one else, possessed this power independently, and could wield it arbitrarily. "The curse causeless shall not come." No man can curse those whom God hath blessed. And the power to curse or bless does not depend upon sacrifices or incantations; it is rather a gift bestowed by God, and which can be exercised only by His permission.

II. Man conscious of supernatural powers and of his subjection to Divine authority in the use of them.

And he said unto them, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." Balaam was certainly not altogether an impostor. "In his career," says Dean Stanley, "is seen that recognition of Divine inspiration outside the chosen people, which the narrowness of modern times has been so eager to deny, but which the scriptures are always ready to acknowledge, and, by acknowledging, admit within the pale of the teachers of the Universal Church the higher spirits of every age and of every nation." But notice—

1. *His consciousness of great powers.* This is clearly implied in the history. "He was endowed with a greater than ordinary knowledge of the one true God: he was possessed of high gifts of intellect and genius: he had the intuition of truth, and could see into the

life of things—in short, he was a poet and a prophet." (b)

2. *His consciousness of subjection to God in the use of his powers.* Repeatedly in the history he confesses that all his great powers were not his own, but derived from God, and could be used only by His permission. This is clearly implied in the portion of the history now under consideration (vers. 8, 13). He seems also to have been aware of the relation of Israel to the true God; and to have doubted whether he would be allowed to curse them. Hence we see—

3. *His sin against God.* Knowing what he did, he ought at once, and decidedly, to have refused the request of Balak. But he said to his messengers, "Lodge here this night," &c. He coveted "the rewards of divination"; he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." For unhallowed gain he would have prostituted his great gifts to wicked uses; and hoped to gain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. (c)

III. Man receiving a supernatural visitation.

"And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?" (vers. 9-12). This was an extraordinary visit. But here are three points of general application:

1. *God's access to man's mind.* It was probably by means of a dream or vision that God came to Balaam that night, and made known to him His will. By many avenues God can enter into man's mind, and influence his consciousness. With or without the concurrence of man's will, or even against His will, God can enter his mind and speak to him.

2. *God's interest in man's life.* This is seen in His question to Balaam, "What men are these with thee?" and in His prohibition, "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. The Lord was concerned for Balaam's welfare; He was solicitous that he should not succumb to the temptations presented to him. (d) In many ways God still manifests His solicitude for man's salvation, and His deep interest in every human life.



3. *God's authority over man's life.* "God said unto Balaam, thou shalt not go with them," &c. It is God's to command; it is man's to obey. Man's well-being is in the practical recognition of God's authority over him.

IV. *Man dealing unfaithfully with a Divine communication.*

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak," &c. (ver. 13). The most important part of God's message to him, that which would effectually have ended the business, he withheld from the messengers of Balak. He spoke as if it were possible to curse them, and as if he were inclined to accede to the request of Balak. His avarice is still further manifest in this: he could not bear to lose for ever "the rewards of divination" which the messengers had brought with them. "Balaam's character is not so peculiar as it seems. Separated from the external accidents of time, of country, and position, we may go into the streets, and find a Balaam in every third man we meet. He belonged to that still numerous class who theoretically know God, and who actually do fear Him, but whose love and fear of God are not the regulating and governing principles of their minds. They are convinced, but not converted. They can prize, and strongly desire the privileges of God's elect; they long to 'die the death of the righteous,' but are unwilling to live their life. They would serve God, but they must serve mammon also; and in the strife between the two contending influences, their lives

are made bitter, and their death is perilous."—*Kitto*.

V. *Men dealing unfaithfully as messengers.*

"And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us." "Observe Satan's practice against God's word," says Ainsworth, "seeking to lessen the same, and that from hand to hand, till he bring it to naught. Balaam told the princes less than God told him, and they relate to Balak less than Balaam told them; so that when the answer came to the king of Moab, it was not the word of God but the word of man; it was simply, 'Balaam refuseth to come,' without ever intimating that God had forbidden him."

Learn.

1. *The Divine communications have never been limited to any one people, or country, or age.* Amongst heathen peoples Divine voices have been heard, Divine visions have been seen.

2. *Great goodness is not always associated with great gifts.* "The illumination of the mind is by no means necessarily associated with the conversion of the heart." "Broad is the distinction between spiritual endowments and spiritual character."

3. *Great gifts involve great responsibility and grave peril.* The responsibility of using them in accordance with the will of the Giver, and the peril of misusing them.

4. *The temptation to covetousness is of great subtlety and strength, and assails even the most gifted natures.* "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" &c. (Luke xii. 15-21).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Their procedure, in seeking to lay the armies of Israel under a curse, that their own arms might be successful against them, is a strange notion to us. But it is not so in the East. Even at the present day, the pagan Orientals in their wars have always their magicians with them to curse their enemies, and to mutter incantations for their ruin. Sometimes they secretly convey a potent charm among the opposing troops to ensure their destruction. In our own war with the Bur-

mese, the generals of that nation had several magicians with them, who were much engaged in curing our troops; but as they did not succeed, a number of witches were brought for the same purpose. We may indeed trace it as a very ancient opinion among all people, that the maledictions, and the blessings, the charms, the incantations, and the devotements of men who were believed to be inspired by a superior spirit, good or evil, had the most marked effects, not only upon individuals, but

upon regions and entire nations, and even upon cattle and upon the fruits of the field. Not seldom they sought by strong enchantments to evoke the tutelary divinities of their enemies' cities, desiring thus to deprive them of what was regarded as their chief defence. Hence the proper name of many great cities was preserved as a state secret, that no enemy might be able to make use of it in their invocations. The names by which cities were ordinarily known,—as, for instance, Troy, Carthage, Rome—were not the true and secret names of these places. Rome was called *Valentia*—a name known as hers by very few persons; and *Valerius Soranus* was severely punished for having disclosed it. The heathens had, indeed, certain solemn invocations, by means of which they devoted their enemies to certain divinities, or rather to malignant and dangerous demons. The following is the formula of one of these imprecations, as preserved by *Macrobius*: “Dis-Pater, or Jupiter, if it better please thee to be called by that name—or by whatever name thou mayest be invoked—I conjure thee to pour upon this army (or this town) the spirit of terror and trepidation. Deprive of their sight all those who shall aim their strokes at us, our armies, or our troops. Spread darkness over our enemies, over their cities, their fields, their forces. Look upon them as accursed. Bring them under the most rigorous conditions to which any armies have ever been obliged to submit. Thus do I devote them; and I and those whom I represent, the nation and the army engaged in this war, stand for witnesses. If this doom be accomplished, I promise a sacrifice of three black sheep to thee, O Earth, mother of all things, and to thee, great Jupiter.”—*John Kitto, D.D.*

For additional illustrations on this point see *Dr. Adam Clarke in loco*.

(b) Was this knowledge a reality or a pretence? If we take the narrative in its plain meaning—and that is the meaning in which we think that all historical Scripture should be taken—there can be no doubt that *Balaam* actually had this knowledge, that he not only held the truth, or much of truth, though he held it in unrighteousness, but that God did, in subservience to His own high purposes, actually communicate with him. Any other explanation, however ingenious, is but a continuous and painful distortion of the whole narrative, which revolts the understanding more than do even the strong facts which it tries to mitigate, in deference to the tastes and tendencies of the age. Besides this, the deep attention that *Balaam* had given (and was doubtless known to have given) to the affairs of the Hebrews, and his acquaintance with their early history, their existing condition, and their future hopes, are shown in the noble prophecy which he was eventually constrained to utter.

How he became possessed of the knowledge he held—and held with so little advantage to his own soul—is a question that looks more

difficult than it is. May he not have owed something to such remains of the patriarchal religion as still existed in Mesopotamia when *Jacob* was there, and which his residence for twenty years in that quarter may have contributed to maintain? But the only supposition which accounts fully for the knowledge which *Balaam* possessed of *Jehovah*, whom he generally mentions by that high and peculiar name, is the one which adds to whatever knowledge he possessed from other sources, that which he owed to the Israelites themselves. The way in which this knowledge might be acquired is clear. There could not but be many reports concerning the Israelites during their forty years' wandering in the desert. With a mind awake to everything which concerned his profession, he would be naturally attracted by the reports of the deliverance effected by the Lord for this people who had come out of Egypt, and whose parentage could not be unknown to him. He had surely heard of the passage of the Red Sea, of the waters of *Meribah*, of the miracle of the brazen serpent; and, as in the case of *Simon Magus*, a new source of celebrity and of emolument seemed to open up before him, most enticing to his besetting sin. He then, we may conceive, adopted *Jehovah* as his God, and named himself *Jehovah's* prophet. Nor, it may be, was this wholly with views of worldly advance. It is quite possible, as *Hengstenberg* supposes, that there was a mixture of a higher order of sentiments, a sense of the wants of his moral nature, which led him to seek *Jehovah*, and laid the foundation of his intercourse with Him. This is all the more probable, as we feel bound to understand that the Lord did, in the accomplishment of His own great purposes, vouchsafe unto him special manifestations of the Divine will.—*Ibid.*

(c) Take heed of cares and covetousness, which is an immoderate desire of getting and enjoying the wealth of this world. For it stealthily away the heart of man from God and godliness, and maketh him bend the whole course of his life on earthly pleasures. This is the common sickness and disease of this age wherein we live. For give me one among many that is not overcome with the pleasures of sin, and the profits of the world. It stealthily on such as have sanctified affections, and have escaped out of the filthiness of the world, through the acknowledging of the Lord, and seeketh to overcome them. It is so deceitful and dangerous a sin, that it hath greatly assaulted, and fearfully overcome them after their calling to the truth and profession of the glorious Gospel of Christ our Saviour, and after they have begun to make some conscience of their life and conversation. Nay, such as before their calling and conversation felt no such desires and cares, now begin to be pressed, cumbered, and tempted with them. For as Satan by all means seeketh whom he may devour, and how he may hinder the repentance of sinners, so when he cannot any longer hold

men in horrible sins of idolatry, blasphemy, adultery and contempt of God then like a wily and subtle serpent, he creepeth in another way before we can espy him; then he suffereth us to hate evil company, surfeiting, drunkenness, riot, and excess, but he driveth to another extremity, and possesseth us with distrustful cares, and immoderate thoughts of this world, to desire greedily, to seek continually, to keep wretchedly, and to depart heavily from the vain and momentary things that perish with the use. And as this is a secret and subtle sin (albeit deeply rooted, yet hardly espied) so is it seldom cured and recovered, because men do not much consider of it and regard it, but please and flatter themselves in it. If we would attain to our former estate, and see the danger of this disease, consider the vanity and uncertainty of all worldly things; compare them with spiritual blessings, and they are as dung and dirt matched with gold and silver. "Love not the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17; 1 Tim. vi. 17-19).—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) Balaam was blessed with God's special favour. You will ask at once, How could so bad a man be in God's favour? But I wish you to put aside reasonings, and contemplate facts. I say he was specially favoured by God. God has a store of favours in His treasure-house, and of various kinds—some for a time, some for ever; some implying His approbation, others not. He showers favours even on the bad. He makes His sun to rise on

the unjust as well as on the just. He willeth not the death of a sinner. He is said to have loved the young ruler, whose heart, notwithstanding, was up in the world. His loving mercy extends over all His works. How He separates, in His own Divine thought, kindness from approbation, time from eternity; what He does from what He foresees, we know not, and need not inquire. At present He is loving to all men, as if He did not foresee that some are to be saints, others reproaches to all eternity. He dispenses His favours variously—gifts, graces, rewards, faculties, circumstances, being indefinitely diversified, nor admitting of discrimination or numbering on our part. Balaam, I say, was in His favour; not indeed for his holiness' sake, not for ever; but in a certain sense, according to His inscrutable purpose who chooses whom He will choose, and exalts whom He will exalt, without destroying man's secret responsibilities, or His own governance, and the triumph of truth and holiness, and His own strict impartiality in the end. Balaam was favoured in an especial way above the mere heathen. Not only had he the grant of inspiration, and the knowledge of God's will, an insight into the truths of morality, clear and enlarged, such as we Christians even cannot surpass, but he was even admitted to conscious intercourse with God, such as even Christians have not.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

## GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN'S COMPANIONSHIPS.

(Verse 9.)

Human companionships are—

1. *Observed by God.* The guests we entertain, the persons who visit us, the associations we enter into, the friendships we form, are all known unto the Lord.

2. *Challenged by God.* "What men are these with thee?" This enquiry was made neither because the Lord needed information, nor yet simply to open the conversation on the mission of the messengers of Balak. It was designed, as Hengstenberg suggests, to awaken "the slumbering conscience of Balaam, to lead him to reflect upon the proposal which the men had made, and to break the force of his sinful inclination." God addresses the same question to the young who are forming dangerous associations; to Christians who take pleasure in non-religious and worldly society, &c. He urges this

solemn enquiry (1) by the voice of conscience; (2) by the preaching of His truth; (3) by the exhortations and admonitions of His Word; and (4) by the remonstrances of His Spirit.

This enquiry also indicates the Divine concern as to human companionships. We may regard this concern as—

I. An indication of the Divine solicitude for the well-being of man.

Nothing whatever that is of importance to us is uninteresting to God. In every man, created in His image and redeemed by the precious blood of His Son, He has the deepest and tenderest concern.

II. An indication of the importance of our companionships.

Inasmuch as He is so concerned as to the character of our associates, it must be a matter of vital importance to us,



and should receive our serious attention.

1. *Our associates indicate our character.* "A man is known by the company which he keeps."

2. *Our associates influence our character.* "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

(a) "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" &c. (Prov. i. 10-15). "Enter not into the path of the wicked," &c. (Prov. iv. 14-19). "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," &c. (b)

III. An indication of our responsibility to God for our companionships.

For the associations we form and the alliances we contract we must every one give account to God. Soon or late we

each must answer the interrogation, "What men are these with thee?"

IV. An indication of the danger of dallying with temptation.

Balaam should have sent the messengers back to Balak at once, with a firm refusal to comply with his request. His longing for "the rewards of divination" led him to keep them for the night; and by so doing he increased the perilousness of his position tenfold. "To parley with temptation is to play with fire." In matters of right and wrong let us never hesitate; for hesitation in such matters is both sinful and dangerous. (c) To the invitations of the tempter let us respond with a prompt and decisive *No*. To the summons of Duty let us render speedy and hearty obedience.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The examples of our companions will exert a plastic influence in the formation of our own character, slow and silent, perhaps, but irresistible and successful: and this influence will be in proportion to the love and esteem we cherish for them. All nations and all ages have confessed the truth of this sentiment. The example of a beloved companion is omnipotent, more especially if he be a sinful one, because a bad model finds in the depravity of our nature something that prepares it to receive the impression. One evil companion will undo in a month all that parents and teachers have been labouring for years to accomplish.—*J. A. James.*

There is a certain magic or charm in company, for it will assimilate, and make you like to them by much conversation with them; if they be good company, it is a great means to make you good, or confirm you in goodness; but if they be bad, it is twenty to one but they will infect and corrupt you. Therefore be wary and shy in choosing, and entertaining, or frequenting any company or companions; be not too hasty in committing yourself to them; stand off awhile till you have inquired of some (that you know by experience to be faithful), what they are; observe what company they keep; be not too easy to gain acquaintance, but stand off and keep a distance yet awhile, till you have observed and earned touching them. Men or women that are greedy of acquaintance, or hasty in it, are oftentimes snared in ill company before they are aware, and entangled so that they cannot easily get loose from it after when they would.—*Sir Matthew Hale.*

(b) Flee unholy company, as baneful to the

power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul as thou wouldst be for thy body. Durst thou drink in the same cup, or sit in the same chair with one that hath an infectious disease? And is not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself? Of all trades, it would not do well to have the collier and the fuller live together; what one cleanseth, the other will blacken and defile. Thou canst not be long among unholy ones, but thou wilt hazard the defiling of thy soul, which the Holy Spirit hath made pure.—*W. Gurnall.*

Those who willingly associate with the sinful are like men strolling with some trivial object through a district infected with fever, heedless of the invisible arrows of disease spreading through the air: or they may be compared to the River Thames, which is a sweet and pretty river enough near its source; but in the great metropolis it has kept company with drains and sewers, under the belief that its current was too powerful and pure to be injured by them. It was meant that the river should purify the sewer; but, instead of that, the sewer has corrupted the river.—*Union Magazine.*

(c) Suffer not Satan's fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parley or dispute about them; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenade or fire-ball cast into his clothes by the enemy, he does not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imaginations unto greater disturbance.—*John Owen, D.D.*

Young persons should, above all things, beware of beginnings, and by no means parley with temptations; their greatest security is in flight, and in the study to avoid all occasions

of evil; for the cockatrice, which may be easily crushed in the egg, if suffered to hatch and grow up, will prove a deadly serpent hard to be destroyed.—*Gleanings.*

## HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. I

(Verses 1-14.)

This story of Balaam I believe to be an honest narrative of facts as they actually occurred (see Micah vi. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14). These repeated references to the history of Balaam in the Old and New Testaments come in support of our belief in the reality of the history; and teach us that since Peter and Jude and John were anxious that the man's character and history should not be forgotten, and that the Church in their days should profit by the beacon-warning which the whole career of this half-bad, half-good man furnished; so, too, should we in our day gather up the details of his history and from them learn what is the lesson of the whole, how a man may struggle and fight against God; against God's kindness and God's voice, and God's warnings, and against his own thoughts and convictions, and better aspirations, until he becomes a light quenched in darkness, a heart hopelessly hardened, a man whom it is "impossible to renew unto repentance."

Look at the circumstances that brought Balaam into notice. . . .

Let us notice three things, as illustrative of human character and of the general history of Divine Providence.

I. How the career and fortunes of the children of Israel were made known in those days.

Those were the days of mere oral communication. From mouth to mouth, and from father to son, events passed along and through society. There was no machinery for the spread of intelligence: it was circulated just in the natural order of things. By these means the knowledge of Israel and of Israel's God appears to have been spread throughout all the countries surround-

ing the Sinaitic peninsula. This was in fact a revelation to these people; a mercy in making known to them, that amidst all their gods and vanities, there was yet a mightier and holier One, who would not give His name to idols, nor His "praise to graven images."

II. But this fear of the Moabites was needless, from the express instructions given to the Israelites (see Deut. ii. 9).

Of course the King of Moab, Balak, knew nothing of this; he and his elders might, however, have reflected upon the fact that the Israelites with anxious solicitude had avoided doing the least injury to the territory of the Moabites; they might have remembered that this powerful body of people had scrupulously paid for the bread and water that had been furnished them as they passed through their territory (Deut. ii. 28, 29). But the Moabites themselves were a lawless predatory tribe, in whom the will for conquest was manifested as far as their power went; and hence the needless fear of the King of Moab, expressed in that nervous language that at once reminds us of the old shepherd princes: "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." What a fine illustration is this of human nature! How "the wicked sleeth when no man pursueth:" how suspicious unprincipled men generally are! how men have estimated others by their own standard of right and wrong!

III. Let us add a word or two about Balaam.

What was he? Was he a heathen soothsayer? (and in Josh. xiii. 22 he is called so): and if he was a heathen soothsayer, how did he come to utter

such glorious and far-reaching predictions? Or was he a prophet of the true God, like Isaiah or Micah? And if so, how did he come to do such wicked things, and be so base and avaricious, and at last so gross and sensual a tempter of the people of Israel?

In reply to such questions, we remark, that previous to the constitution of the children of Israel into a separate religious nation, a nation selected for a religious purpose, with ultimate reference to the Messiah, there was a patriarchal Church extending among all the faithful that preserved uncorrupted the early traditions of the human family. This church, doubtless, received frequent oral communications from God Himself. The men composing this church were not of the seed of Abraham, but were in those far distant days a pledge and type of the enlargement of the Church of Christ among all nations. Such were Shem, Job, and Jethro.

Now, Balaam, I take it, was one of that ancient patriarchal church. traditions, partly correct and partly corrupt, had been handed down generation after generation until they came to him; on these traditions, and on occasional visits from God, his soul lived. There was a religiousness and purity about the man that attracted attention among the wild and lawless Moabites; they were impressed and awe struck with

the blameless simplicity of his life as compared with the licentious character of their sensual Baal worship; and so the man came to be regarded with reverence and fear by them, to be invested with a kind of supernatural and mysterious power by which whosoever he blessed was blessed, and whomsoever he cursed was cursed, in the estimation of these wild Moabites.

Now you can hardly imagine a more difficult and perilous position for a man to be placed in. A man standing alone in his religious ideas; far in advance of all around him in real and essential truth; got to be regarded by others, until he comes to regard himself, as a very extraordinary character; looking down upon others quite as much as they look up to him; surrounded by wild nomadic tribes, who are filled with a vague but real, and all the more real because it was vague, dread of this superior being. What a school this, to learn lessons of the human heart—to learn how it will shuffle, and cheat, and lie, to keep up this spiritual power—to learn how, under seeming religiousness, it will aim at personal aggrandizement and influence; to learn how, step by step, he who was at one time the most religious man among them, may become the darkest and the blackest sinner among them. To us in this history the Scripture says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—*W. G. Barrett.*

#### HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. II.

(Verses 1-14.)

There is nothing so dear to man as power; the acquisition of influence over the minds of others is a conquest full of hazard and responsibility. Balaam had this influence. He had the key of Balak's heart, and could turn its wards which way he pleased. To him, living a retired life in the desert, the messengers of the king come; their request is *urgent*, for it is from the king; their request is *flattering*, for it is a testimony

from Balak that a prophet's word is better than a king's sword; their request is apparently *reasonable*, for why should the Moabites be destroyed? and their request was accompanied by "those rewards of divination" without which the heathen never consulted their favourite oracles.

But their request was a sinful one; and I believe from the language of ver. 9, Balaam saw even then that it was a



wicked request ; but it had come before him so unexpectedly—he was so honoured and flattered by it, that his moral sense, his religious convictions, got crushed and overpowered as this huge temptation came and stated itself before this weak man, and said to him, “Yield to me, yield at once, for riches and honour are in my right hand : all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Let us notice—

I. The first false step Balaam took, as indicative and prophetic of all the other downward ones.

(Ver. 8.) “And he said unto them, Lodge here this night,” &c.

This was not the way to meet this great peril. I believe he had quite enough knowledge on the subject to have shaped for himself a different course. I believe this was just a hypocritical pretence to gain time, and that the man, even now dazzled by the gifts of gold, the rewards of divination, was clutching them in his heart long before they came into his actual possession. This I think furnishes the key to the whole after-history of this greatly bad man. I do not think Balaam meant at all to consult God. The matter was too plainly before him to create any necessity for that ; but it was a capital trick to play off upon these Moabitish courtiers to impress them with a deeper sense of his importance and influence.

Do not you think we may do the very same thing? We may talk of praying over such and such a matter, and seeking Divine direction, and asking for the leadings of Providence, when really God's will is the last thing we are thinking about ; when we have already decided and determined what to do. God sees our purpose and determination to have our own way, and man hears our words about Divine direction and guidance ; and so, next to cheating God, the worst thing a man can do is to cheat himself ; so Balaam did, and you know how it succeeded.

II. The warning Balaam had during the night of agitation that followed this visit.

My reason for thinking that Balaam did not intend to consult God at all is the language of the ninth verse, which reads to me very much like a reproof. It is not Balaam going to God and asking, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” but God coming to Balaam and saying to him, “What are *you* doing? ‘What men are these with thee?’ How is it they are with thee? How is it that you did not dismiss them at once?”

Ah! that must have been a sore night of perplexity and agitation to Balaam. . . . How often must he have resolved and re-resolved, and yet, spite of all his resolutions, in the absence of a holy will did he reconsider the thing, and make up his mind, if possible, to go with the messengers of Balak.

Then in the stillness of that night, came this warning to Balaam, “What men are these with thee?” How that warning might have saved him if he had heeded it : but out of stammering lips and from an undecided heart he speaks the truth, and tells God their character and message to him.

All this was the beginning of the end of Balaam. . . . Let us look here, and see the easy steps to hell. “What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Learn how a man, in spite of his better nature and religious revivings, may quench the Spirit and die a desolate and forsaken outcast.

III. The positive refusal God gave to Balaam.

“Thou shalt not go with them.”

Here was mercy and severity ! It was *mercy* not to abandon this man ; not to give him up hopelessly and for ever to his own heart's lust, without another word of warning ; mercy to follow him after his stammering, hesitating, half-hearted confession, to say, “No, no, thou shalt not go ! There is a way that seemeth right to thee, Balaam, but the end of it is death.” And does God never follow us in that manner ? Does he not come and cry unto us, “Turn ye, turn ye at My reproof ;

why will ye die?" Oh! if you have ever heard that voice, listen to it; it is thy life! "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

Here was *severity* too. Do you think a man like Balaam ought to have required such a prohibition? Ought he not at once to have felt that the whole scheme was a wicked one, which he ought to hate, and to shun and to protest against?

Ill fares it with the health of life and

soul when it must be put under the care of lock and key; when nothing but commands and prohibitions can keep it in order; when it must be surrounded by "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," to keep it right. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and the emancipated spirit has higher but happier constraints than the law of Sinai, in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.—*Ibid.*

### BALAK'S SECOND APPLICATION TO BALAAM: THE DECREASE OF RESISTANCE TO EVIL.

(Verses 15-21.)

In this section of the history we have four conspicuous steps.

I. The repetition with increased force of the request of Balak to Balaam.

"And Balak sent yet again princes," &c. (verses 15-17).

1. *The embassy was more influential.* The princes who were sent this second time were more numerous and more honourable than the former ones. Here was a powerful appeal to the vanity of the prophet.

2. *The message was more urgent.* "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me."

3. *The inducements were stronger.* "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me," &c. If Balaam wanted rank and dignities, he should have them; if he wanted wealth, he should have it also. If he will but comply with the request of the King of Moab, the most splendid honours and the most munificent treasures shall be freely given to him. Learn: that *temptations which have been declined reluctantly or half-heartedly are presented again, and with greater force.* The manner of Balaam's dismissal of the former messengers prepared the way for a repetition of their mission.

II. The repetition under aggravating circumstances of guilty delay by Balaam.

"And Balaam answered and said

unto the servants of Balak," &c. (vers. 18, 19). In entertaining the proposal at all, and in keeping the messengers during the night, the prophet sinned and that heinously; he ought to have sent them back to Balak with a firm and final refusal. And his guilt was the greater because—

1. *He had been challenged by God as to the presence of the former messengers.* "God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?"

2. *He had already been prohibited from complying with the request of Balak.* "God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). To a really good man this would have been a final settlement of the question. So it ought to have been to Balaam.

3. *He himself felt and plainly declared that he was bound by the Word of the Lord in the matter.* He "said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the command of Jehovah my God, to do little or great." An utterance worthy of a holy man and a true prophet. But in the light of this declaration, Dr. Kitto forcibly enquires: "Then why not at once dismiss the messengers? He already knew the mind of God, and he ought to have known that 'God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the Son of Man, that He should repent.' Instead of that, he says, 'Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know

what the Lord will say unto me more.' What 'more'? Did Balaam fashion to himself a god after his own heart, and imagine that he also was to be moved from his declared purpose by the gifts and promises of Balak? Could he mean to insult God by his importunities? Did he hope to extort from Him, out of regard to his own worldliness, permission to bring a curse upon an entire nation which, as was well known, had been so long the object of His covenant care? Even such was what Peter calls 'the madness of the prophet.'" Such also was the great wickedness of the prophet. He was afraid to transgress the command of God; but he hoped to obtain from Him permission to accompany the messengers, and so to gratify his passion for worldly gain. (a) The temptation was stronger than before; but the reasons for resisting it were also more clear and cogent; and his guilt in not doing so was darker and heavier. A temptation once dallied with, it becomes more difficult to resist it hereafter.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;  
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace"  
Pope

### III. The repetition of the Divine visit to Balaam.

"And God came unto Balaam at night, and said," &c. (ver. 20). Here are two things which claim attention—

1. *The permission granted.* God said unto Balaam, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." When man is determined to have his own way, a time comes when God ceases to oppose him in the matter. "My people would

not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto the stubbornness of their heart; they walk in their own counsels." In giving permission to Balaam, "God granted in anger what He denied in mercy" (comp. chap. xi. 18-20, 31-33).

2. *The condition enforced.* "But yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." God allows Balaam to go, but He restrains him so that he shall not in any way injure His cause and people. The power of the wicked for injury is limited by the Lord.

### IV. The setting out of Balaam on the journey.

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." (b) Mark his unbecoming and sinful haste: God said to him, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them;" but he did not wait to be called: he "rose up in the morning," &c. "Because," says Dr. Adam Clark, "he was more hasty than he ought to have been, and went to them instead of staying till they should come to him, it was said of him, not *כי הלך ki halach, that he went*; but *כי הולך הוא ki holech hu, i.e., he went of his own head*—without being called." He "ran greedily for reward."

The chief lesson of our subject is, the importance of meeting the first temptation to evil with uncompromising resistance: to hesitate or to parley is to diminish our power of resistance, and to increase the power of the temptation, thus making successful resistance a task of almost insuperable difficulty. (c) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil," &c. (1 Pet. v. 8, 9).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You will observe he *wished* to go with Balak's messengers, only he felt he *ought not* to go; and the problem which he attempted to solve was, *how* to go and yet not offend God. He was quite resolved he would, anyhow, act religiously and conscientiously; he was too honourable a man to break any of his engagements; if he had given his word, it was sacred; if he had duties, they were imperative; he had

a character to maintain, and an inward sense of propriety to satisfy; but he would have given the world to have got rid of his duties; and the question was, *how* to do so without violence; and he did not care about walking on the very brink of transgression, so that he could keep from falling over. Accordingly, he was not content with *ascertaining* God's will, but he attempted to *change* it. He in-



quired of Him a *second time*, and this was to tempt Him. Hence, while God bade him go, His anger was kindled against him because he went.

This surely is no uncommon character; rather, it is the common case even with the more respectable and praiseworthy portion of the community. I say plainly, and without fear of contradiction, though it is a serious thing to say, that the aim of most men esteemed conscientious and religious, or who are what is called honourable, upright men, is, to all appearance, not how to please God; but how to please themselves without displeasing Him. This surely is so plain that it is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon it. Men do not take for the object towards which they act, God's will, but certain maxims, rules, or measures—right perhaps as far as they go, but defective because they admit of being subjected to certain other ultimate ends, which are not religious. Men are just, honest, upright, trustworthy; but all this, not from the love and fear of God, but from a mere feeling of obligation to be so, and in subjection to certain worldly objects. And thus they are what is popularly called moral, without being religious. Such was Balaam. He was, in a popular sense, a strictly moral, honourable, conscientious man; that he was not so in a heavenly and true sense is plain, if not from the considerations here insisted on, at least from his after history, which (we may presume) brought to light his secret defect, in whatever it consisted. His defect lay in this, that he had not a single eye towards God's will but was ruled by other objects.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(6) That Balaam *saddled* his ass, must not lead us to suppose that there were in those days any proper saddle. This is a far later invention, even for riding on horseback, and is not even now in the East generally used in riding on asses. On this subject we have the negative evidence of sculptures. In Egypt, indeed, there are no equestrian sculptures at all except those which represent riding in chariots. Classical sculpture has no saddles or saddle cloths. We used to think that the earliest saddles were to be seen in the sculptures of the Sassanian dynasty at Shahpur in Persia; but the following passage would take

them back to the last age of the Assyrian empire: "In the earliest sculptures (at Nineveh) the horses, except such as are led behind the king's chariot, are unprovided with cloths or saddles. The rider is seated on the naked back of the animal. At a later period, however a kind of pad appears to have been introduced; and in a sculpture at Konyunjik was represented a high saddle, not unlike that now in use in the East" (Layard).

The saddling of asses mentioned in Scripture probably consisted merely in placing upon their backs such thick cloths or mats as we see in some of the asses represented in the Egyptian paintings. Something of the same kind, or pieces of rug, felt, carpet, or cloth, are still in general use; although a kind of pad is now frequently to be seen upon asses in the large towns of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, especially among those let out for hire. Such town asses have also bridles, and sometimes stirrups, none of which, any more than the pad, do we remember to have noticed on asses upon actual journeys; and we have known of asses being used continuously on journeys quite as long as that which Balaam now undertook; and that by persons whose position in life quite enabled them to ride a horse or mule had they so chosen. It would not be at all extraordinary, even now, that a person, expecting to be laden with riches and honours, should ride upon an ass, still less in an age and country where no other mode of conveyance, except that of riding upon camels, appears to have been known.—*J. Kitto, D.D.*

(c) In worldly matters, "think twice;" but in duty, it has been well said, "first thoughts are best;" they are more fresh, more pure, have more of God in them. There is nothing like the first glance we get at duty, before there has been any special pleading of our affections or inclinations. Duty is never uncertain at first. It is only after we have got involved in the mazes and sophistries of wishing that things were otherwise than they are, that it seems indistinct. Considering a duty, is often explaining it away. Deliberation is often only dishonesty. God's guidance is plain, when we are true.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

### APOSTASY.

"And Balak sent princes more and more honourable" (ver. 15).

"Tarry ye also here this night" (ver. 22).

"Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword" (chap. xxxi. 8).

We assume Balaam to have been a true prophet, though not of Israel. He appears to have been a singularly

good man. And, taking the history as it rises, we may learn what his religion was.

*It was very enlightened.* "His eyes were open" (see Mic. vi. 5, 8). These were Balaam's views of religion.

*Balaam's religion was founded on principle,—the all-comprehensive principle of godliness.* All considerations are kept in abeyance, waiting on the

will of God. "Lodge ye here this night: I will bring you word as the Lord shall speak."

*His religion was practically exemplified.* Balaam acted on principle, and obeyed the word of the Lord. "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). Then Balaam said to the princes of Moab, "Get you unto your land," &c. (ver. 13).

But Balaam fell, and the first of our texts brings us to the turning point of his life—*downwards*.

**I. Balaam apostatized through worldliness.**

The temptation was strengthened. "Balak sent princes more honourable." The overtures now comprehend all that kings can do. "I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me." Still the prophet resists; but after a hard contest principle relaxes under the influence of this sun of worldly glory. Balaam becomes a soft and pliant thing in the hands of these monarchs—a total apostate from God. By means of the world the devil ever tempts man; tempting again and again by worldly pleasures, ambition, gain. Take heed and beware of covetousness. Of all mortal sins this is perhaps the most insidious and self-deceptive.

**II. Balaam apostatized progressively.**

Religion is neither got nor lost all at once. The progress of Balaam's fall may be traced.

1. *His heart went after covetousness.* He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

2. *He tampered with temptation.* Why were these ambassadors kept a second night?

3. *He struggled against his own conscience.* Mountain after mountain is ascended, sacrifice after sacrifice offered, that by some means he may obtain sanction to do what God said he should not do.

4. *He departs from the word of the Lord.* "If the men call thee thou mayest go with them"—a final check and test interposed. Now he is on the downhill course. The deepest, darkest sins follow. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

**III. Balaam apostatized despite the greatest obstacles.**

*Conscience was a perpetual obstacle. The fear of death haunted him.* From the high places of Baal, where he would have cursed, he saw the Israelites encamped below. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," he utters in apostrophe; when at once his own death appals him, like a dark vision. Then he abruptly exclaims, "Let me die the death of the righteous!" There were *extraordinary as well as ordinary obstacles*. What is to do with that poor ass? Mercy, Balaam! . . . . At last the angel reveals himself, sword in hand. "I have come out to withstand thee," &c. "If," said Balaam, "it displease thee, I will get me back." *Ir.* Alas! he is not turned back yet. "The Lord is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." Providence is mediatorial. The very difficulties and obstacles and adversities of life are incorporated with God's saving plans; yea, are ordered, permitted, or overruled for our good.

**IV. Balaam's apostasy was not only sad but fatal.**

Never did he obtain the "wages of unrighteousness." His career was one of unmitigated disappointment, issuing in the sin unto death. Very briefly is the last tragic scene given. God will be avenged of the Midianites. In the war against them Balaam is found among the enemies of the Israelites. "Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Thus the veil is drawn darkly; nor does the sacred historian ever name the fallen prophet's name more; but the silences of the Bible are significant as its utterances. Nor did that man perish alone in his iniquity. Does the backslider ever?

From this subject many additional lessons may be gathered—there is one of *hope for apostates*. The forbearance of God should lead to repentance. Balaam's case shows that there is hope for the worst and hope to the last.—*A Military Chaplain, in The Homiletic Quarterly.*

## BALAAM AND HIS ASS; DIVINE CHECKS ON MAN'S DOWNWARD COURSE.

(Verses 22-35).

We are met by a preliminary inquiry ; why was God angry with Balaam because he went with the princes of Moab, when He had given consent to his going with them? (1) It is important to observe that God had not given to Balaam an unconditional permission to go with them. He might go with them on condition that the men came to call him. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." This condition had not been fulfilled when "Balaam rose up in the morning," &c. (ver. 21). "And God's anger was kindled because he went of himself." (2) Even this conditional permission was given not because God approved of his going, but because Balaam was determined to obtain permission if it were possible. (3) He went hoping to set aside the restriction which God had imposed upon him,—that he was to do that which He commanded. Clearly Balaam both desired and hoped to be able to curse Israel, and thus obtain the wealth and honours upon which his heart was set. Hence, "God's anger was kindled because he went." (a) God mercifully places obstructions in his way to save him from further sin, and to warn him against attempting to curse Israel, or exceed or deviate from His word to him. This part of the history is a striking illustration of *Divine checks on man's downward course*.

I. These checks are sometimes in operation when unperceived by man.

"The Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him . . . . And the ass saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Thrice the ass saw the Angel, and presented indications of alarm ; but Balaam saw Him not until God had opened the mouth of the ass to remonstrate with him. Balaam was blinded to such sights by the fierce lust of wealth and honours which possessed him. Many a dispensation of God's providence is intended as a check

upon man's downward course, which is not seen to be such by the person most concerned. As Balaam saw the troubled and troublesome ass, but not the forbidding Angel ; so men see the afflictions, the losses, the difficulties of their course without perceiving the merciful design of God in them ; they are irritated at the obstructions in their path, but do not see the Angel who is beyond the obstructions.

II. These checks are numerous.

"Mark," says Babington, "the manifold admonitions that Balaam had, and yet all in vain. The ass avoids the Angel once, twice, and thrice ; she hurts his foot against the wall, she lied down under him, never used to do thus before—yet all this could not smite his heart to think, Surely my journey pleaseth not God. Even thus in some sort doth God still deal with men, and yet all in vain ; their sin will not be seen—their fault will not be amended. He giveth us a twitch within, either at some sermon, or otherwise, and yet that vanisheth away, and we forget it. Then He striketh our foot against the wall, that is, He crosseth us with sickness or loss, or some calamities, assaying whether that will bring us home ; but still we beat the ass, and continue our course. When this will not serve, He throweth us down, ass and all, that is, when the lesser crosses profit not, He layeth on greater, greater, I say, and greater, till He makes us feel, even as a father smiteth more, till he humble the froward stomach of his child, yet many times in vain still."

III. These checks are of various kinds.

This is very clear in Balaam's case, in which we see—

1. *Obstructions to his progress.* The advance of his ass was thrice arrested by the Angel of the Lord. When our course is delayed, or difficulties crowd our path, or sickness removes us for a time from the active walks of life, we



shall do well to enquire whether these things are checks to restrain us from sin, or warnings that we are on a dangerous road.

2. *Appeals to his reason.* God gave to the dumb ass a voice to summon the erring and angry prophet to the exercise of reason. "The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done," &c. (vers. 28-30). "And where," asks Dr. A. Clarke, "is the wonder of all this? If the ass had opened *her own mouth*, and reproved the rash prophet, we might well be astonished; but when *God opens the mouth*, an ass can speak as well as a man." (b)

And God by various means still addresses the reason of sinful man. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," &c. "Why will ye die?" Christianity is a sublime and mighty appeal, not only to the heart, but also to the understanding of man.

3. *Rebukes for his conduct.* "The Angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?" &c. (vers. 32, 33). (c) The Lord now rebukes men for their sins by the penalties of those sins, by the condemnations of His holy Book, and by the voice of conscience. And these rebukes are designed to deter from sin.

4. *The awakening of his conscience.* "Balaam said unto the Angel of the Lord, I have sinned," &c. His whole line of conduct shows a mind ill at ease, a troubled, anxious mind. His irritation, petulance, and unreasonable anger with his ass, indicate clearly that he had no rest within. God in his great mercy was checking him by the voice of his conscience. Conscience will not allow the sinner to pursue his downward course without stirring remonstrances and stinging rebukes. (d) "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man; to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living."

IV. These checks are graduated in force.

See this in the case of Balaam: first his "ass turned aside out of the way;"

then "she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall;" then "she fell down under Balaam;" and then there appears unto the angry man "the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand," who administers to him a stern rebuke. "In this carriage of the Angel," says Mr. Ainsworth, "the Lord shows us the proceedings of His judgments against sinners: *First*, He mildly *shakes His rod* at them, but lets them go untouched. *Secondly*, He comes *nearer*, and touches them with an easy correction, as it were wringing their foot against the wall. *Thirdly*, when all this is ineffectual, He brings them into such *straits* that they can neither turn to the right hand nor to the left, but must fall before His judgments, if they do not fully turn to Him."

V. These checks are limited in their effects.

1. *By the perverseness of man's character.* The earlier obstructions only irritated and enraged Balaam. His eager lust for wealth and honour blinded him that he did not even see the forbidding Angel. To a perverse and hardened heart mild restraints are utterly ineffectual. There are, alas! some men to whom even severe checks seem ineffectual.

2. *By the irreversibleness of man's conduct.* "If it displease thee," said Balaam, "I will get me back again. And the Angel of the Lord said, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." He had advanced too far to turn back then. He must go on. Only in one respect will the Divine restraint be effectual now; and that God insists upon: "Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." Unutterably solemn is this irreversibleness of moral conduct. The career once entered upon, in many instances, must be continued. The deed once done, can never be undone; and many of its consequences will live on—for ever! (e)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Why did Almighty God give Balaam leave to go to Balak, and then was angry with him for going? I suppose for this reason, because his asking twice was tempting God. God is a jealous God. Sinners as we are—namely, as creatures of His hand—we may not safely in rude upon Him, and make free with Him. We may not dare to do that which we should not dare to do with an earthly superior, which we should be punished, for instance, for attempting in the case of a king or noble of this world. To rush into His presence, to address Him familiarly, to urge Him, to strive to make our duty lie in one direction when it lies in another, to handle rudely and practise upon His holy word, to trifle with truth, to treat conscience lightly, to take liberties (as it may be called) with anything that is God's; all irreverence, profaneness, unscrupulousness, wantonness, is represented in Scripture, not only as a sin, but as felt, noticed, quickly returned on God's part (if I may dare use such human words of the Almighty and All-holy God, without transgressing the rule I am myself laying down—but He vouchsafes in Scripture to represent Himself to us in that only way in which we can attain to the knowledge of Him)—I say, all irreverence towards God is represented as being jealously, and intently, and fearfully noticed and visited, as friend or stranger among men might resent an insult shown to him. This should be carefully considered. We are apt to act towards God and the things of God as towards a mere system, a law, a name, a religion, a principle; not as against a Person, a living, watchful, present, prompt and powerful eye and arm. That all this is a great error, is plain to all who study Scripture; as is sufficiently shown by the death of 50,070 persons for looking into the Ark—the death of the prophet by the lion, who was sent to Jeroboam from Judah, and did not immediately obey his instructions—the slaughter of the children at Bethel by the bears, for mocking Elisha—the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land for smiting the rock twice—and the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(b) The true exaltation lies between the notion that the whole occurrence was purely internal, and consisted exclusively in ecstasy brought by God upon Balaam, and the grossly realistic reduction of the whole affair into the sphere of the senses and the outward material world. The Angel who met the soothsayer in the road, as he was riding upon his ass, though He was not seen by Balaam till Jehovah had opened his eyes, did really appear upon the road, in the outward world of the senses. But the form in which He appeared was not a grossly sensuous or material form, like the bodily frame of an ordinary visible being; for in that case Balaam would inevitably have seen Him, when his beast became alarmed and restive again and again, and refused to go forward, since it is not stated anywhere that

God had smitten him with blindness, like the men of Sodom (Gen. xix. 11), or the people in 2 Kings vi. 18. It rather resembled the appearance of a spirit, which cannot be seen by everyone who has healthy bodily eyes but only by those who have their senses awakened for visions from the spirit-world. Thus, for example, the men who went to Damascus with Paul, saw no one, when the Lord appeared to him in a miraculous light from heaven, and spoke to him, although they also heard the voice (Acts ix. 7). Balaam wanted the spiritual sense to discern the Angel of the Lord, because the spirit's eye was blinded by his thirst for wealth and honour. This blindness increased to such an extent, with the inward excitement caused by the repeated insubordination of the beast, that he lost all self-control. As the ass had never been so restive before, if he had only been calm and thoughtful himself, he would have looked about to discover the cause of this remarkable change, and would then, no doubt, have discovered the presence of the Angel. But as he lost all his thoughtfulness, God was obliged to open the mouth of the dumb and irrational animal, to show a seer by profession his own blindness. "He might have reproved him by the words of the Angel; but because the rebuke would not have been sufficiently severe without some deep humiliation, He made the beast his teacher" (*Calvin*). The ass's speaking was produced by the omnipotence of God; but it is impossible to decide whether the modulation was miraculously communicated to the animal's voice, so that it actually gave utterance to the human words which fell upon Balaam's ears (*Kurtz*), or whether the cries of the animal were formed into rational discourse in Balaam's soul, by the direct operation of God, so that he alone heard and understood the speech of the animal, whereas the servants who were present heard nothing more than unintelligible cries. In either case Balaam received a deeply humiliating admonition from the mouth of the irrational beast, and that not only to put him to shame, but also to call him to his senses, and render him capable of hearing the voice of God. The seer, who prided himself upon having eyes for Divine revelations, was so blind, that he could not discern the appearance of the Angel, which even the irrational beast had been able to see. By this he was taught that even a beast is more capable of discerning things from the higher world, than a man blinded by sinful desires. It was not till after this humiliation that God opened his eyes, so that he saw the Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing in his road, and fell upon his face before this fearful sight.—*Keil and Del.*

(c) We shall find in the sequel the person styled the Angel of the Lord, as in other places, so here, assuming the character and exercising the prerogative of Deity: for He it is that afterwards says, "The word that I shall

“speak up to thee, that thou shalt speak.” We are to understand, therefore, by this designation, the mighty, the uncreated Angel, by whom God made the worlds, the eternal Word, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, and which in the fulness of time was made flesh and dwelt among men.—*Dr. H. Hunter.*

The Angel of Jehovah's presence, which went before His people in the wilderness, not only to guide, but to guard and protect them; and who was an adversary to their adversaries, and at all times stood up for their help and assistance against all those that hated and opposed them.—*John Gill D.D.*

(d) Balaam did only what men so entangled always do. The real fault is in themselves. They have committed themselves to a false position, and when obstacles stand in their way, they lay the blame on circumstances. They smite the dumb, innocent occasion of their perplexity as if it were the cause. And the passionateness—the “madness” of the act is but an indication that all is going wrong within. There was a canker at the heart of Balaam's life, and his equanimity was gone; his temper vented itself on brute things. Who has not seen the like—a grown man, unreasoning as a child, furious beyond the occasion? If you knew the whole, you would see that was not the thing which had moved him so terribly; you would see that all was wrong inwardly.

It is a strange, sad picture this. The first man in the land, gifted beyond most others, conscious of great mental power, going on to splendid prospects, yet with hopelessness and misery working at his heart. Who would have envied Balaam if he could have seen all—the hell that was working at his heart?—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

It is a man's own dishonesty, his crimes, his wickedness, and boldness, that take away from him soundness of mind; these are the fires, these the flames and firebrands of the wicked.—*M. T. Cicero.*

(e) Here is a serious reflection, that when we have begun an evil course we cannot retrace our steps. Balaam was forced to go with the men; he offered to draw back—he was not allowed—yet God's wrath followed him. This is what comes of committing ourselves to an evil line of conduct; and we see daily instances of it in our experience of life. Men get entangled, and are bound hand and foot in dangerous courses. They make imprudent marriages or connections; they place themselves in dangerous situations; they engage in unprofitable or shameful undertakings. Too often, indeed, they do not discern their evil plight; but when they do they cannot draw back. God seems to say, “Go with the men.” They are in bondage, and they must make the best of it; being the slave of the creature, without ceasing to be the responsible servant of God; under His displeasure, yet bound to act as if they could please Him. All this is very fearful.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Consider the impossibility under such circumstances of going back. Balaam offers to go back. The Angel says, “Go on.” There was yet one hope for him, to be true, to utter God's words, careless of the consequences; but he who had been false so long, how could he be true? It was too late. In the ardour of youth you have made perhaps a wrong choice, or chosen an unfit profession, or suffered yourself weakly and passively to be drifted into a false course of action, and now, in spite of yourself, you feel there is no going back. To many minds, such a lot comes as with the mysterious force of a destiny. They see themselves driven, and forget that they put themselves in the way of the stream that drives them. They excuse their own acts as if they were coerced. They struggle now and then faintly, as Balaam did—try to go back—cannot, and at last sink passively in the mighty current that floats them on to wrong.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

## BALAAH AND HIS ASS; OR, A LESSON ON OBSTRUCTIVE PROVIDENCES.

(Verses 22-35.)

Is this a literal narrative? Yes; for,—

1. The style in which it is written is plain and unadorned.

2. The story is not essentially incredible.

3. It is referred to in other parts of Scripture as plain matter of fact.

4. The end to be gained was quite enough to warrant the miracle.

5. The speech of the ass is so simple

and natural that it could not be either a delusion of Balaam's excited imagination, or an invention of some later fabulist.

I. See the lessons it taught Balaam.

1. *It convinced him of spiritual blindness.* He was more stupid than his ass. She could see an angel, but Balaam could not, because he was engrossed and blinded by his covetous greed.

2. *It taught absolute submission to*



*God.* He made his ass, however reluctant, obey *him*; and he, too, however obstinate, must be taught to obey God. This was indispensable to prepare him to do God's work among the Moabites.

II. The subject is full of lessons to us.

It shows us the worth of obstructive providences, and the wisdom of giving patient attention and heed to them.

1. *We often go on wrong errands, or on right errands in a wrong spirit.* Some go on wrong errands, seeking a change of place, from selfish ambition—pursuing a business necessarily sinful—projecting a matrimonial union without regard to piety—resolution to leave home and country from recklessness and self-will. Some have wrong motives in a right way:—*e.g.*, mercenary ministers of religion, self-seeking teachers, &c.—insincere rebukers of sin, who pander to the rich and make allowance for their vices, while they are very severe on the offending poor, &c.

2. *God checks us in His providence, and in love to our souls.* Illness; raising up of insuperable difficulties; falling off of friends; superior success to rivals, &c.

3. *We are apt to fret and be angry at the instruments of our disappointment.* We cast our spite and blame on second causes.

4. *We should seek spiritual enlightenment, to see that it is God's doing.* Be not angry and resentful, but give yourselves to prayer; else, like Balaam, you will not see that it is God who opposes you (ver. 34).

5. *We can only be permitted to go forward when we are brought to a state of perfect subjection to God.* Two things are here included: a perfect purity of motive and freedom from worldly self-seeking; and an entire acquiescence in whatever God appoints, desires, or does. Thus, acknowledge God in all your ways, and He will direct your steps.—*T. G. Horton.*

### BALAAH'S ASS.

(Verses 28 30.)

Observe—

I. The historic character of the miracle here recorded.

In the history of Christ and in that of His apostles, incidents are recorded which are miraculous, side by side with those which are not miraculous. The one cannot be separated from the other; they are interwoven into one narrative, which must be accepted as a whole, or rejected altogether. So it is in the history of Balaam. It is well to note, concerning this incident, that it is spoken of by a New Testament writer as an undoubted fact (2 Pet. ii. 16).

II. The miracle itself.

The speech of the ass as the instrument of a higher intelligence, finds an analogy in another Scriptural record. In the first temptation of man, the speech of the serpent was used to convey the thought of a higher and more intelligent creature. If God permitted

Satan to use a serpent to tempt man, why should He not Himself use an ass to reprove man? If the tongue of the serpent was used to convey intelligible sounds, why should not that of any other animal be used for the same purpose? In one case the miracle was wrought by Satan for an evil end, in the other by God for a good end. We have another somewhat analogous case in the speech of parrots and other birds, who utter intelligible sentences without understanding them, the difference being that the ass did at once, and therefore miraculously, what these creatures learn to do by imitation. It is evident that these birds possess a special God given faculty to imitate human words, and He who made them made the ass also.

III. The object of the miracle.

It was to bring Balaam to obey the Divine voice of his conscience, which

was well nigh drowned in the clamour of his covetousness for "the wages of unrighteousness."

1. It was calculated to humble him in relation to a gift of God upon which he probably prided himself. It is likely he was an eloquent man. He would now see that God could endow a brute with the gift of speech.

2. He would also see that an ass could discern a messenger from heaven, where he, blinded by his desire for gain, could see nothing but empty space.

3. He might also have learned that all speech was under Divine control, and that he would be able to utter only such words as God would permit.

#### Lessons.

i. That the means used by God to bring men to obedience are always

adapted to that end, although they do not always attain it. Balaam needed to repent of his present course, and nothing could have been more likely to startle him into reflection upon it than a reproof from his own beast. He had a moment's space for consideration before he stood face to face with the Angel of the Lord; but his half-hearted confession of his sin (ver. 34) shows—

ii. That, when obedience to a certain command is withheld (ver. 12), miracles are powerless to change character. Those who were unwilling to take the yoke of Christ (Matt. xi. 29), were not won by His miracles. See also Luke xvi. 31. Miracles startle the soul, but obedience transforms the character.—*From Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament.*

### THE MEETING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verses 36-41.)

In this portion of the history these are the principal points:

I. The king receives the prophet with marks of great honour.

"And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him" &c. (ver. 36). And as a further token of his respect, the king sent unto Balaam and to the princes who were with him a feast from the sacrifices which he offered (ver. 40). The heathen were accustomed to pay great respect and reverence to their priests and prophets. We have evidence of this in Gen. xlvii. 22; 1 Kings xviii. 19; Ezra vii. *et al.* Their conduct in this respect is—

1. A *rebuke* to many Christians. Paul exhorted the Christians at Thessalonica to esteem their ministers "very highly in love for their work's sake:" yet how many Christians fail lamentably in this respect!

2. An *example* to many Christians. In this respect we may profitably imitate them. Our Lord saith to His faithful ministers, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (see

also Matt. x. 40, 41; John xiii. 20). (a)

II. The king expresses his surprise at the delay of the prophet in coming to him.

"And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee?" &c. (ver. 37). Thus he gently rebukes him for not having come to him when he was first asked to do so. And he seems surprised that his power to reward the prophet had not secured his ready compliance with his request. Clearly he was of opinion that the blessing or curse of a prophet was purchasable if the would-be purchaser could only bid high enough for them; that Balaam had his price; and that he, Balak, was able to pay it (b) (comp. Acts viii. 18-23). Balak seems to have had no idea of the sacredness of genius, or of the solemn responsibilities involved in the possession of great gifts, or that endowments from God must be used only in religious accordance with His holy will. A worldly-minded man, he can think of no higher motive than this, "Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" (c)

But of what value are the highest honours and the richest rewards which kings can bestow, when they are obtained at the cost of righteous principles and a clear conscience? (*d*)

III. The prophet endeavours to moderate the expectations of the king.

"And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee," &c. (ver. 38). Balaam felt himself under a restraint which he could not throw off; no, not even for all the wealth and honours which a king has power to bestow. (*e*)

The Lord was watching over the interests of Israel; and while He protected them neither could Balaam curse them, nor Balak conquer them. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," &c. (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). (*f*)

IV. The king endeavours by sacrificial offerings to induce Jehovah to favour his design.

"Balak offered oxen and sheep." *Keil and Del.*: "The sacrifices were not so much thank-offerings for Balaam's happy arrival, as supplicatory offerings for the success of the undertaking before them. 'This is evident,' as Hengstenberg correctly observes, 'from the place and time of their presentation; for the place was not that where Balak first met with Balaam, and they were only presented on the eve of the great event.'"

Moreover, they were offered unquestionably not to the Moabitish idols, from which Balak expected no help, but to Jehovah, whom Balak wished to draw away, in connection with Balaam, from His own people (Israel), that He might secure His favour to the Moabites."

How utterly mistaken in this view of the Divine Being! He changes not. No sacrifices can alter His will, or turn Him aside from His purposes. How unworthy of God and how dishonouring to Him is such a view of His character! No bribes, however costly, can induce Him to forsake His people, or to favour an unrighteous cause. And the sacrifices offered to Him with such a view are an abomination in His sight.

V. The king and prophet ascend a height and obtain a view of the camp of Israel.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people." Balak thought that Balaam must see the Israelites in order that he might curse them effectually. And now the time had come for the prophet to make the awful attempt. Balak was in a state of eager anxiety. But who shall tell the state of Balaam's mind at this time!

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point see p. 62.

(b) As a mere matter of fact, known to us, by distressing observation, the saving of money is a fascination of the devil to many men; it absorbs their energies; it engrosses their time; it perverts their moral nature; it destroys natural affection; it sets them on fire of hell. Kept from the sight of gold, they may even bear a strong resemblance to pious men; they may be intelligent, genial, and entertaining, yet the moment their thoughts are turned to the accumulation of property, every trace of nobleness is destroyed. The victim of the world is entirely without self-control: every speck of dust is to him as a shackle of bondage; he would risk his eternity for a stone or a clod. At all times he would not know this, for in the moments of his release from the urgency of his tormentor he might discover traits of a better disposition; it is when he is brought again into contact with worldly con-

cerns that he shows how utterly he is enslaved and unmanned. I may remind my young hearers of the tiger that was trained to be the playmate of a favourite child. Weeks and months and years elapsed, and the tiger was gentle and playful; it so happened, however, that in licking the child's hand it tasted blood, and instantly the natural appetite of the creature was excited, and the child fell a victim to its ferocity. It is so in the moral history of many a man: there are breaks in human life which are filled up by many excellencies, and which apparently give the lie to the charge of apostacy, and yet suddenly some besetting sin will set the whole nature on fire, and in the madness of an hour the fabric of a lifetime may be overthrown.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) But few men in any country touch the highest point of fame; thousands upon thousands in all generations come to honour and influence, yet in a few months after their death



their names cease to have any interest but for the smallest circles. This reflection ought not to discourage virtue. Peace of heart is better than mere renown. To be known in heaven is the best fame. To have a place in the love of God is to enjoy the true exaltation.—*Ibid.*

(d) With money you can buy the canvas and the oil, but not the artistic eye which interprets and appreciates the picture; you can buy the poem, but the living and inspiring poetry is not for sale; you can rent the garden, but cannot bribe the flowers to whisper their tender messages. After all, it is but a very little way that money can go; it can do nearly everything in the market-place or among the dust of cities, but what do the angels know of your currency, your bills of exchange, your promissory notes, and your intricate conveyancing of estates? Not one of the great redemptions of life can be wrought out with money; death takes no bribe; the grave will not sell its victories for gold; you may buy the Bible, but you cannot buy the Holy Ghost; you may pay for the masonry, but no money can put you in possession of the Spirit of the altar.—*Ibid.*

(e) The kite broke away from its string, and instead of mounting to the stars it descended into the mire. The river grew weary of its restraining banks, and longed to burst them, that it might rush on in the wild joy of freedom; down went the embankments, the river became a flood, and carried destruction and desolation wherever it rushed. Unrestrained the coursers of the sun, and lo! the earth is burned; unbind the girdle of the elements, and chaos reigns! Let us never desire to be rid of those restraints which God has seen fit to lay upon us; they are more needful than we dream.

Remember how the vine, when bound to the stake which upheld it, judged itself a martyr, and longed to be free; but when it saw the wild vine at its feet, rotting on the damps and pining amidst the heats, and producing no fruit, it felt how needful were its bonds if its clusters were ever to ripen.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) According to the gloomy prophets, all England is going to the bad—not England alone, but all countries are hastening on to a general and everlasting smash. Then one begins to fret about the Church of God; for according to the soothsayers of the age, Anti-Christ is yet to come, and new heresies are to spring up; the dogs of war are to be let loose, the Pope is to rule and burn us, and one hardly knows what else. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation, have been made sometimes to minister poison to every bright hope, but here is our comfort with regard to the future:—

“He everywhere hath sway,  
And all things serve His might:  
His very act pure blessing is,  
His path unsullied light.”

Let the worst come to the worst, the best will come of it ere long. “If the heavens were a bow,” saith one, “and the earth were the string, and God should fit the arrows of His vengeance thereon, and shoot at the sons of men, yet they could find shelter with the archer himself.” Our refuge is in God; let the worst calamities occur to the world in years to come we are secure. It must be well; it cannot be ill. “Jehovah, Jireh.” Lift high the banner and hopeully advance to the battle, for the victory shall surely come unto the Arm eternal, the Will immutable.—*Ibid.*

### HISTORY OF BALAAM.—No. III.\*

(Verse 36—chap. xxiv. 25.)

We approach the termination of this eventful history. The portion of Scripture that forms the basis of our remarks is chap. xxii. 36, to the end of chap. xxiv.

We left Balaam on his journey to Balak; we now commence with his arrival in the land of Moab. With what strangely mingled feelings must Balaam have pursued this journey! That dumb ass had not spoken for nothing: a good many twinges of conscience, no doubt, Balaam had on the way; perhaps, after all, God did not like his going with these messengers; perhaps he had better have been content with his humble mountain home;

perhaps he will get into trouble, for he cannot forget—“The word that I shall speak, that shalt thou speak.” However, Balaam goes on, just this once, and when this affair is over he will return home, eschew Balak and his messengers for ever; in fact, Balak had made him so many presents already, that he will be able in future to afford to keep a conscience, and to say “No” to temptation.

As the key to this history, recall what was said before of Balaam's connection with the old patriarchal church: he was a monotheist amongst a multi-

\* For Nos. I. and II. see pp. 429-431.  
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tude of polytheists; to that idea of God he was faithful. Moreover, Balaam knows God to be the God of Israel, that God has chosen Israel, and that God is with them. The history of their eight and thirty years' weary pilgrimage in the peninsula of Sinai, was matter of notoriety among all the wild Ishmaelites of that part; and Balaam is seer, he can prognosticate out of existing facts; and in the opposition of the Amalekites, and Moabites, and Edomites to the Israelites, he sees the certainty of their final overthrow. And yet the King of Moab sends to him to curse the people of God's choice; a people that Balaam knows are to be victorious; and he goes, although he knows it to be impossible to curse them; but he hopes to get his "wages of iniquity."

And so Balaam and Balak meet. The first words of the interview are ominous. Balak chides Balaam, and Balaam admits that all he says is right; but adds, "the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

When a man has come to that pass it is all over with him. How many do we meet every day, who would be wicked if they dared; who would go

here, and would go there, only they are not at liberty; who don't mind the sin at all, only its exposure:—they might be reproved; they might lose a situation, &c. There is nothing left, but another edition of Solomon's picture in the Proverbs, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof," &c.

Endeavour to realize the scene. Balaam was alone; he "went to a high place;" there he stood by his burnt offering; below, on the plains, were God's people Israel: from the top of the rocks he saw their encampment, the "pillar of cloud" still hovering over the assembled host: all was order, security, and strength amongst Israel. Far away is the uncrowned king and his nobles, waiting the return of Balaam: but meanwhile a very notable event occurs,— "And God met Balaam." Balaam shall yet be warned, shall yet have another word; and so God met him.

The lessons from the whole are—

The formidable power of sin. Man can degrade himself below the level of a beast. The dumb ass was wiser than Balaam.—*W. G. Barrett.*

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Build me here seven altars.* "As seven was a number of perfection, Balaam chose it on this occasion, because he intended to offer a grand sacrifice, and to offer a bullock and a ram upon each of the altars; the whole to be made a burnt offering at the same time. And as he intended to offer seven bullocks and seven rams at the same time, it could not be conveniently done on one altar, therefore he ordered seven to be built."—*A. Clarke LL.D.*

The offerings were presented to Jehovah, whom Balaam acknowledged as his God.

Verse 2. *Balak and Balaam offered.* "Balak presented the sacrifices to be

offered for him and for his people; and Balaam performed the office of a priest and offered them."—*Bp. Patrick.*

Verse 3. *I will go; peradventure Jehovah will come to meet me.* "The meaning of these words is apparent from chap. xxiv. 1: and 'he went no more to meet with the auguries.' Balaam went out to look for a manifestation of Jehovah in the significant phenomena of nature."—*Keil and Del.*

*He went to an high place.* *Keil and Del.:* "a bald height." *Speaker's Comm.:* "'a bare place on the hill,' or 'a scar'; as opposed to the high place with its grove of trees." Heathen augurs were wont to select the lonely and

barren summits of mountains for their aspicues.

Verse 4. *God met Balaam.* "God served His own purposes through the arts of Balaam, and manifested His will through the agencies employed to seek it, dealing thus with Balaam in an exceptional manner. For to God's own people auguries were forbidden (Lev. xix. 26)."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*I have prepared seven altars, &c.* "The spirit of these words is thoroughly that of a heathen worshipper expecting in all his devotions his *quid pro quo*."—*Ibid.*

Verse 7. *Parable.* Heb. : *mashal*, a proverb, similitude, sententious poem.

*Aram.* This word signifies "highland," and denotes the country to the north-east of Palestine as far as the banks of the Euphrates. The country between the Euphrates and the Tigris was specially designated "Aram-naharaim," or "Aram of the two rivers."

*Mountains of the east, i.e.,* of Mesopotamia (comp. Deut. xxiii. 4).

*Defy Israel.* Rather "threaten," or "menace Israel."

Verse 8. *How shall I defy, &c.* Rather : "how shall I threaten whom Jehovah hath not threatened?"

Verse 9. *Dwell alone, &c., i.e.,* separate from other nations. The outward separation was a symbol of their inward separation from the heathen world; and this inward separation was an indispensable condition of their outward separation and safety.

Verse 10. *The fourth part, &c.* (comp. chap. ii.).

Verse 13. *Come with me unto another place, &c.* Balak's idea seems to be, that Balaam's view of the camp of Israel was so extensive, and so impressed him with their number and order and power, that he could not curse them; and that if he took him to a place from whence he could see only a small portion of them, he would then be able to curse them.

Keil and Del., however, take a different view of this. They say the translation should be, "'whence thou wilt see it (Israel); thou seest only the

end of it, but not the whole of it' (*sc.* here upon Bamoth-Baal). This is required," they say, "by a comparison of the verse before us with chap. xxii. 41, where it is most unquestionably stated, that upon the top of Bamoth-Baal Balaam only saw 'the end of the people.' For this reason Balak regarded that place as unfavourable, and wished to lead the seer to a place from which he could see the people, without any limitation whatever."

Verse 14. *The field of Zophim.* "Or 'of watchers.' It lay upon the top of Pisgah, north of the former station, and nearer to the Israelitish camp; the greater part of which was, however, probably concealed from it by an intervening spur of the hill. Beyond the camp Balaam's eye would pass on to the bed of the Jordan. It was perhaps a lion coming up in his strength from the swelling of that stream (cf. Jer. xlix. 19) that furnished him with the augury he awaited, and so dictated the final similitude of his next parable."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 18. *Rise up, Balak, &c.* A summons to minute and earnest attention.

Verse 20. Omit the "commandment" of the A. V.

Verse 21. *"He hath not beheld iniquity, &c.* There is a large diversity in the interpretation of this verse. That of Keil and Del. seems to us correct: "God sees not  $\text{יָדָע}$ , worthless-

ness, wickedness, and  $\text{עָמָל}$ , tribulation, misery, as the consequence of sin, and therefore discovers no reason for cursing the nation. That this applied to the people solely by virtue of their calling as the holy nation of Jehovah, and consequently that there is no denial of the sin of individuals, is evident from the second hemistich, which expresses the thought of the first in a positive form: so that the words, 'Jehovah his God is with him,' correspond to the words, 'He beholds not wickedness;' and 'the shout of a king in the midst of it,' to His not seeing suffering. Israel therefore rejoiced in the blessing of God



only so long as it remained faithful to the idea of its Divine calling, and continued in covenant fellowship with the Lord. So long the power of the world could do it no harm. The 'shout of a king, in Israel is the rejoicing of Israel at the fact that Jehovah dwells and rules as King in the midst of it (cf. Exod. xv. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 5). Jehovah had manifested Himself as King, by leading them out of Egypt."

Verse 22. *God.* אֱלֹהִים, the Mighty One.

*Unicorn.* Rather, the buffalo, or wild bull.

Verse 23. *Surely there is no enchantment, &c.* Keil and Del. translate: "For there is no augury in Jacob, and no divination in Israel. At the time it is spoken to Jacob, and to Israel what God doeth." נִחְשׁ וְקִסָּם, οἰωνισμός and μαντεία, *augurium et divinatio*, were the two means employed by the heathen for looking into futurity. The former was the unfolding of the future, from signs in the phenomena of nature and inexplicable occurrences in animal and human life; the latter pro-

phesying from a pretended or supposed revelation of the Deity within the human mind. נִבְּאָה, 'according to the time,' i.e., at the right time, God revealed His acts, His counsel, and His will to Israel in His word, which He had spoken at first to the patriarchs, and afterwards through Moses and the prophets. In this He revealed to His people in truth, and in a way that could not deceive, what the heathen attempted in vain to discover through augury and divination (cf. Deut. xviii. 14-19)."

Verse 25. *Neither curse them, &c.* Keil and Del.: "'Thou shalt neither curse it, nor even bless.' In his vexation at the second failure, he did not want to hear anything more from Balaam."

Verse 28. *Peor.* "Mount Peor was one peak of the northern part of the mountains of Abarim by the town of Beth-peor, which afterwards belonged to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20), and opposite to which the Israelites were encamped in the steppes of Moab (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46)."—Keil and Del.

*Jeshimon.* See on chap. xxi. 20.

## THE SACRIFICE OF BALAK AND BALAAM.

(Verses 1-4.)

Observe—

I. Objectively this sacrifice was as perfect as the offerers could make it.

Clearly they aimed at presenting a perfect offering. This is exhibited—

1. In the *number* of offerings. There were seven altars, upon each of which they offered a bullock and a ram. Seven was regarded as a sacred and perfect number.

2. In the *victims* offered. "Seven oxen and seven rams." The victims were not mean or of little worth; but of the most valuable that were used for sacrifices.

3. In the *kind* of offerings. They were burnt offerings, which were presented without any reserve, being en-

tirely consumed in honour of the Divine Being.

It was a law amongst the Hebrews that they should present to God offerings of their choicest and best. Spiritually that law is still binding. (a)

II. Subjectively this sacrifice was very imperfect, and even sinful.

In the sentiments and motives of the offerers there was much that was both erroneous and evil.

1. The sacrifice was offered *with an admixture of faith and superstition*. Balak and Balaam believed the truth that acceptable approach to God must be by sacrifice. But there was superstition in their view of His regard for sacrifices, or the way in which He was

influenced by them. It was also belief in heathen superstitions, which led Balaam to go to look for auguries (ver. 3). Superstitions commend neither the offerer nor his offerings to God.

2. The sacrifice was offered *under the impression that the offering was meritorious on the part of the offerers, and placed God under an obligation to them.*

"And God met Balaam, and he said unto Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram." The state of mind which led Balaam thus to call Divine attention to the sacrifices, implied the ignoring of two facts of vital importance:—(1) God's proprietorship of all things. We can only present unto Him His own. David felt this, and said, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (comp. Ps. 1. 8-13). (2) Man's relation to God as a dependent and sinful creature. Where this is realised, all notions of merit in man in relation to God, or of obligation upon God in relation to man, are effectually excluded. The best man at his best, is but an unprofitable servant, as regards God (Luke xvii. 10). Balaam did not feel thus: he was not humble, but thought he had rendered to God very meritorious service. (b)

3. The sacrifice was offered *as a means to induce God to change His mind.* He had forbidden Balaam to curse Israel (chap. xxii. 12); Balaam desired Him to revoke that prohibition, and to permit him to curse them; and for this

purpose he offered his sacrifice. At first God absolutely forbade his accompanying the messengers of Balak; then afterwards He gave him conditional permission to go with them; and Balaam probably regarded this as the result of a change of mind in the Divine Being, and drew from it encouragement to hope that he might obtain from Him permission to curse Israel. How false and dishonouring was such a view as regards God! how perilous as regards man! (c)

4. The sacrifice was offered *with a view of obtaining permission and power to curse the people of God.* This was the final cause of the sacrifice, and was utterly sinful in the sight of God.

#### Conclusion.

1. Learn that *the true value of sacrifice is to be looked for not in the quantity or quality of the offering, but in the spirit of the offerer.* "Thou desirest not sacrifice," &c. (Psa. li. 16-19). (d)

2. *Trusting in Christ Jesus for acceptance, let us present ourselves to God.* "God must be worshipped with our best. A man's best is himself; and to sacrifice this is the true sacrifice." "I beseech you therefore, brethren," &c. (Rom. xii. 1). (e)

3. *He who has truly given himself to God will keep back nothing from Him.* Hearty obedience and reverent worship he will render to God, and kind and helpful service to man. "By Jesus, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise," &c. (Heb. xiii. 15, 16).

#### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point see p. 101.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 100.

(c) Balaam wanted to please himself without displeasing God. The problem was how to go to Balak, and yet not offend God. He would have given worlds to get rid of his duties, and he sacrificed, not to learn what his duty was, but to get his duty altered. Now see the feeling that lay at the root of all this—that God is mutable. Yet of all men one would have thought Balaam knew better, for had he not said, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath he said, and shall He not

do it?" But, when we look upon it, we see Balaam had scarcely any feeling higher than this—God is more inflexible than man. Probably had he expressed the exact shade of feeling, he would have said, more obstinate. He thought that God had set His heart upon Israel, and that it was hard, yet not impossible, to alter this partiality. Hence he tries sacrifices to bribe, and prayers to coax God.

How deeply rooted this feeling is in human nature—this belief in God's mutability—you may see from the Romish doctrine of indulgences and atonements. The Romish Church permits crime for certain considerations. For certain considerations it teaches that God will forgive crimes. Atonements after, and indul-

gences before sin, are the same. But this Romish doctrine never could have succeeded, if the belief in God's mutability and the *desire* that He should be mutable, were not in man already.

What Balaam was doing in these parables, and enchantments, and sacrifices, was simply purchasing an indulgence to sin; in other words, it was an attempt to make the Eternal Mind change. What was wanting to Balaam to feel was this—God *cannot* change. What he did feel was this—God *will* not change. There are many writers that teach that this and that is right because God has willed it. All discussion is cut short by the reply, God has determined it, therefore it is right. Now, there is exceeding danger in this mode of thought, for a thing is not right because God has willed it, but God wills it because it is right. It is in this tone the Bible always speaks. Never, except in one obscure passage, does the Bible seem to refer right and wrong to the sovereignty of God, and declare it a matter of will: never does it imply that if He so choose, He could reverse evil and good. It says, "Is not My word equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" was Abraham's exclamation in a kind of hideous doubt whether the Creator might not be on the eve of doing injustice. So the Bible *justifies* the ways of God to man. But it could not do so unless it admitted Eternal Laws, with which no will can interfere. Nay more, see what ensues from this mode of thought. If Right is right because God wills it, then if God chose, He could make injustice, and cruelty, and lying to be right. This is exactly what Balaam thought. If God could but be prevailed on to hate Israel, then for him to curse them would be right. And again: if power and sovereignty make right, then, supposing that the Ruler were a demon, devilish hatred would be as right as now it is wrong. There is great danger in some of our present modes of thinking. It is a common thought that Might makes Right, but for us there is no rest, no rock, no sure footing, as long as we feel right and wrong are mere matters of will and decree. There is no safety then, from those banking feelings and wishes to alter God's decree. You are unsafe till you feel "Heaven and

earth may pass away, but God's word cannot pass away."—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(d) All sacrifice is worthless which is not vitalized by the moral element. Where the sacrifice represents a broken spirit, where it sets forth the operations of a contrite heart, it becomes acceptable to God, and useful as a basis of negotiation with heaven. Where the moral element is present, the physical element will not be forgotten. Though sacrifice in itself, without the presence of spiritual feeling, is absolutely worthless in the sight of God, yet where the moral element is present in the form of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, sacrifice will be presented even in its material forms. Thereby the penitent man expresses his love, and fosters his faith, and testifies his gratitude. Blessed be God, in our case it is unnecessary that we provide bullock or burnt offering. The one final sacrifice has been offered in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Higher than this no man can go. After His blood has been shed, the blood of all animals is unavailing. It is enough that the Lamb of God poured out His blood for the sins of the world. Yet we have to offer sacrifices, not indeed of atonement, but of gratitude; we have to testify by exalted pursuits, by noble endeavours, by generous efforts to ameliorate the condition of mankind, by all holy labour in the cause of evangelization, that our hearts have been broken and healed, that our spirits have been bowed down, and yet lifted up.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." That is a very solemn enunciation. Sacrifice is worship. You may pray devout prayers, you may sing sweet hymns with rapture, you may rejoice in all the peacefulness of the Sabbath well observed, you may be a religious man, and yet you may not have mercy; men may perish about you, and you be indifferent; works of beneficence may be going on under your eye, and you have no part or lot in them. It is possible for a man to be a religious man, and not a Christian. To be a Christian a man must have that spirit which led Christ to give Himself to be a ransom for the world, and he must carry his life so as to be a perpetual benefaction, not to himself, but to others. To be Christlike in these regards is to be a Christian.—*H. W. Beecher.*

## BALAAH'S FIRST PARABLE; THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 5-12.)

Balaam went out to look for auguries, and the Lord God met him and put a word in his mouth. "God designed to serve His own glory by him, and therefore met Balaam. Balak having chosen him for his oracle, God would constrain him to utter such a confession, to the

honour of God and Israel, as should render those for ever inexcusable who should appear in arms against them." Thus the Divine message was spoken by the lips of a bad man; and he who longed to curse Israel, in exalted strains pronounces their blessedness. Balaam's



declaration of the happiness of Israel, sets forth *the Blessedness of the People of God*.

I. It is placed beyond the power of their enemies.

Balaam both felt and declared this —“How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I threaten whom the Lord hath not threatened? . . . And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me?” &c. (vers. 8, 11, 12). Balaam felt that he could not curse Israel. And if he had cursed them, his curse would not have injured them, but himself. “See what it is to live within the wall of God’s blessing.” “Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion,” &c. (Psa. cxxv. 1, 2). “Upon this rock I will build My Church,” &c. (Matt. xvi. 18). “If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” &c. (Rom. viii. 31, 35-39). “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (a)

II. It consists in their separation from the ungodly.

“From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” “The separation of Israel from the rest of the nations was manifested outwardly to the seer’s eye, in the fact that ‘the host of Israel dwelt by itself in a separate encampment upon the plain. In this his spirit discerned the inward and essential separation of Israel from all the heathen.’” In three respects were the Israelites separated from other nations—

1. *Politically they were independent of them.* Both their country and their polity the Hebrews received from the Lord God; and so long as they kept themselves from the vices of the heathen, their independence was unimpaired.

2. *Morally they were separated from them.* God called them to complete separation from the idolatries and vices

of the corrupt Canaanites and others, and to the practice of a pure morality and the observance of an exalted and exalting worship.

3. *By the possession of peculiar privileges they were separated from them.* “Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (comp. Deut. vii.). To them pertained “the adoption, and the glory,” &c. (Rom. ix. 4, 5). This declaration of their separation from other nations “has been so marvelously realized in the history of the Israelites, notwithstanding their falling short of the idea of their Divine calling, ‘that whereas all the mightier kingdoms of the ancient world, Egypt, Assyria, Babel, &c., have perished without a trace, Israel, after being rescued from so many dangers which threatened utter destruction under the Old Testament, still flourishes in the Church of the New Testament, and continues also to exist in that part which, though rejected now, is destined one day to be restored’ (*Hengstenberg*).”

The people of God are still called to be a separate people. “They are not of the world,” said Christ, “even as I am not of the world. I pray not,” &c. (John xvii. 14-16). Their maxims, customs, laws, and conduct are dissimilar from those of the world: “their inheritance, their home, their citizenship are in heaven; their affections, conversation, pursuits, and pleasures are heavenly.” (b)

III. It consists also in their vast numbers.

“Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the numbers of the fourth part of Israel?” To the eye of Balaam the Israelites seemed an innumerable host (comp. Gen. xiii. 16, and Deut. x. 22). Their rapid increase was regarded as the result of the blessing of the Lord their God.

The spiritual Israel of God is “a great multitude which no man can number.” We may form an approximately correct idea of the countless

hosts of the people of God from three considerations. Their number is—

1. *Unlimited as regards time.* It includes the good of all past ages of the world's history, of the present, and will include those of all future ages.

2. *Unlimited as regards place.* The good of all lands are members of the great Church of the living God. "They shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north," &c. (Luke xiii. 29). "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations," &c. (Rev. vii. 9).

3. *Unlimited as regards race or class.* The godly African as well as the godly European, &c. The rich and the poor; the learned and the unlearned; the bond and the free, &c. (c)

IV. It consists also of righteousness of character.

Balaam speaks of the Israelites as "the righteous" (ver. 10). "But Israel," says *Keil* and *Del.*, "was not only visibly blessed by God with an innumerable increase; it was also inwardly exalted into a people of צדיקים, righteous or honourable men. The predicate righteous is applied to Israel on account of its Divine calling, because it had a God who was just and right, a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. xxxii. 4), or because the God of Israel was holy and sanctified His people (Lev. xx. 7, 8; Exod. xxxi. 13), and made them into a *Jeshurun* (Deut. xxxii. 16; xxxiii. 5, 26). Righteousness, probity, is the idea and destination of this people, which has never entirely lost it, though it has never fully realised it. Even in times of general apostasy from the Lord, there was always an *εὐλογία* in the nation, of which probity and righteousness could be truly predicated (cf. 1 Kings xix. 18). The righteousness of the Israelites was a product of the institutions which God had established among them, of the revelation of His holy will, which He had given them in His law, of the forgiveness of sins, which He had linked on to the offering of sacrifices, and of the communication of His Spirit, which was ever living and at work in His Church (*Hengstenberg*)."

The people of God are still called to be righteous; and they realize this calling by the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ:—"even the righteousness of God through faith of Christ Jesus unto all and upon all that believe." There cannot be any true blessedness apart from righteousness. (d)

V. It is in some respects desired even by the ungodly.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" "Death," again quoting from *Keil* and *Del.*, "is introduced here as the end and completion of life. 'Balaam desires for himself the entire, full, indestructible, and inalienable blessedness of the Israelite, of which death is both the close and completion, and also the seal and attestation' (*Kurtz*). This desire did not involve the certain hope of a blessed life beyond the grave, which the Israelites themselves did not then possess; it simply expressed the thought that the death of a pious Israelite was a desirable good. And, this it was, whether viewed in the light of the past, the present, or the future. In the hour of death the pious Israelite would look back with blessed satisfaction to a long life, rich 'in traces of the beneficent, forgiving, delivering, and saving grace of God'; he could comfort himself with the delightful hope of living on in his children, and his children's children, and in them of participating in the future fulfilment of the Divine promises of grace; and lastly, when dying in possession of the love and grace of God, he could depart hence with the joyful confidence of being gathered to his fathers in Sheol (Gen. xxv. 8)."

Thus the ungodly bear testimony to the excellence of the lot of the people of God by desiring to share their blessedness. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." There is but one way of enjoying their privileges, and that is by possessing their character. To "die the death of the righteous," we must live the life of the righteous. (e)

Is this blessedness ours? Are we truly of the number of God's spiritual

Israel? By faith in Christ every man may become a member of the "chosen generation," and the "holy nation."

"They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I read a story the other day of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages were ten or a dozen miles from each other, and the wolves were out, and the horses were rushing forward madly, and the travellers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them; and though the horses tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were fast behind, and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road, and to shut to the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof; they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut; they could hear them gnawing at the door, and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises; but the travellers were safe, because they had entered by the door, and the door was shut. Now, when a man gets in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him; and his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction. But he has got in to Christ, and that is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not start a single beam of the eternal refuge: it must stand fast, though earth and heaven should pass away.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For additional illustrations on the Security of the People of God, see pp. 105, 154.

(b) It is our duty to flee from all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to have no fellowship with the ungodly, nor with the unfruitful works of darkness. This indeed is "pure religion and undefiled, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." This the Apostle Paul urgeth, 2 Cor. vi. 14-18. We know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. One rotten sheep infecteth a whole flock. One leper spreadeth the disease further, to the hurt of sundry other. Now there is no leaven like to the leaven of sin (1 Cor. v. 6); no infection comparable to the infection of sin; no leprosy so deadly and dangerous as the contagion of sin, which bringeth danger and destruction to soul and body. Therefore we must not join ourselves with the ungodly, seeing that we are an holy people to the Lord our God. He hath chosen us to be a precious people unto Himself above other people that are upon the earth. We "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," &c. (1 Pet. ii. 9). Seeing we are washed from the corruptions of the flesh, let us not defile ourselves again; seeing we are called out of the world, let us not return into the world; and seeing we are freed from the thralldom of sin, let us not sell ourselves again to our own lusts, which fight against the soul.

We cannot come near an infectious disease without danger of infection. We cannot touch pitch without danger to be defiled with it.—*W. Attersoll.*

For another illustration on Separation from the world, see p. 94.

(c) The Lord's Church is bigger than any church that men's hands ever formed. There is no wall that can contain the Church of God on earth, and there is no sect line that can reach round it. The Lord's garment is large enough to cover all sects, and to leave room for nations to camp under it besides.—*H. W. Beecher.*

"Lo! a great multitude of all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues." The purpose of the Lord is fixed! Idols he shall utterly abolish! The march of Christianity may have been slow and impeded, but the truth shall yet prosper and prevail; and faith, guided by the sure word of prophecy, may even now behold the wild children of the desert, the wanderers, whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them, the slaves of bloody rites, the victims of fearful delusions, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right mind, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. O glorious society, which shall thus be gathered from all ages, and all ranks, and all countries! There is beauty in diversity! There is majesty in combination! I kindle at the thought of there being a great multitude in heaven; I kindle the more at that of this multitude being drawn from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. What a throng to join in! What a company with which to associate and enter into fellowship! The righteous of past days, of the present, and the future—those who under the earlier dispensations caught faint glimpses of the star of Bethlehem—they who, possessing but a few brief notices of traditional religion, followed after God, and proved that He never left Himself without witnesses—Jews, who deciphered the types, and gave substance to the shadows of the law—Gentiles, on whom shone in all its effulgence the light of the Gospel—the mighty gathering of that splendid season when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do cover the sea." What a multitude through which to move! with which to make acquaintance! with which to hold converse!—*H. Melville, B.D.*

For another illustration on the immense numbers of the people of God, see p. 175.

(d) When society claps hands to the cry, "O *feliz!*" "Oh, lucky fellow!" "Oh, rare



success!" it is the fortunate circumstances of a man's lot of which society is thinking. It is the blessedness of having a great deal of money, of being always comfortable, of being environed with what may minister to pleasure, and able always to command what one desires; it is the blessedness of condition which society crowns with its beatitudes, and to which men pay the tribute of envying it. Alas for this blessedness, which is outside the man; the blessedness of circumstance, and accident, and transient condition; the blessedness which Time's scythe mows down like grass to be cast into the oven! Not condition does Jesus bless, but character. He counts no earthly state enviable, least of all a state of unbroken ease. But the happy man is the good man. What a man is in himself, not where he is,

nor how he lives, nor how much he has, but *what a man is*, is the ground of his blessedness.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

(e) Many in these days desire the death of the righteous, but they never regard their life; they desire their end, but they will not walk in their way; they are willing to end with them, but not to begin with them; they catch for the crown, but will not come to the cross; they would taste the sweet, but they cannot abide the sweat. If we will live with Christ for ever, we must here die with Him for a season; if we will reign with Him in heaven, we must first suffer with Him on earth (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12); we can never die comfortably unless we be careful to live unblameably.—*W. Attersoll.*

### THE VISION FROM THE ROCK.

(Verse 9.)

"From the top of the rocks I see him."

It was of Israel and Israel's glory that the false seer of Pethor spoke. He stood upon the top of Moab's barren rocks, and gazed down on the happy nation whom God had delivered from Egypt, had brought through the desert, and was about to lead into the land flowing with milk and honey. It was with wonder, perhaps with envy too, that Balaam looked on the goodly tents beneath him.

So from these desert lands, and these desert hills, we gaze upon the Church on her way to Canaan, about to be settled in the blessed land and holy city. And when we gaze, what do we see?

**I. The ruggedness of the land of our present sojourn.**

It is the region of hostility as well as barrenness. This is not our rest. These dark mountains are not our home. We may pitch our tents among them for a season, or climb to the top to gaze around us, but they are no dwelling place for us. We may look upon Canaan from Pisgah, but Pisgah will not do for a home. Nebo lies hard by Pisgah, and Nebo tells of death, not of life—mortality is here. This is the land, not of Israel, but of Moab; and its gods are Baal, not Jehovah. We could not abide here.

**II. The glorious land.**

Afar off just now, but still visible, still beautiful. It is the Paradise of God; it is the new Jerusalem; the city which hath foundations; the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The vision gives us a wondrous contrast between what we are and what we shall be, making us long for the day of entrance.

**III. A people delivered from a present evil world.**

Once in bondage, now free; once groaning under oppression, now in the service of a heavenly Master, and heirs of the world to come; the Red Sea crossed, and now between them and their persecutors an iron wall. Forgiven and redeemed; with their backs on Egypt, and their faces to Jerusalem. "A people saved by the Lord."

**IV. A people sustained by Jehovah himself.**

Theirs is the hidden manna, the water from the smitten rock. Jehovah feeds them; Jehovah gives them the living water. It is not man but God who cares for them. All that they have they owe to Him who has delivered them. They feed on angel's food; nay, better, the very bread of God; on Him whose flesh is

meat indeed, whose blood is drink indeed.

#### V. A pilgrim band.

They are strangers on the earth; this is not their home; here is not their city. Their loins are girt, and their staff is in their hand, and they are hastening onward. No sitting down; no taking ease; no folding of their hands. Forward, still forward, is their watchword! Theirs is a pilgrimage, not a pleasure tour. They must not tarry.

#### VI. A people bought with a price.

Their ransom has been blood; and they are not their own. Another life has gone for theirs. They have been plucked from death and the grave, because Another has died and risen for them. To that Other they belong—not to themselves, nor the flesh, nor the world.

#### VII. A people loved with an infinite love.

The banner that is over them is love. The song they sing is love, "Unto Him that loved us." It is a love which passeth knowledge; a love without bound or end; a love eternal and divine. All around and above them is love—the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They are the monuments of love; the witnesses of love—free love, forgiving love, redeeming love; love beyond that which angels know—

a love which constrains them, purifies them, urges them forward, gladdens all their way.

#### VIII. A people preparing to pass over to the goodly land.

It is within sight; a few days, perhaps less, will bring them over. Their journey is nearly done. Their toil and weariness will soon be exchanged for rest and glory. And "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "From the top of the rocks" they can see Jerusalem, and Olivet, and Bethlehem; and get glimpses of the whole outstretched land. It is a land of plenty, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; it is a land of light, where there is no night; a land of blessing, where there is no curse; a land of gladness, where sorrow comes not; a summer land, where the frosts of winter chill not; a calm sunny land, where storms vex not, and shadows fall not; a land of health, where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick;" a land of peace, where the war-trumpet never sounds; a land of life, where corruption and mortality enter not, where death and the grave are unknown; a land of union, where broken ties are all reknit, and broken hearts all healed (Rev. vii. 17). There Jesus reigns; there we reign with him.—H. BONAR, D.D. From *Light and Truth*.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE IRRELIGIOUS TO THE VALUE OF RELIGION.

#### (Verse 10.)

The character and example of good men are influential after death. They shine upon us like stars upon the deep—to guide us onward—to allure us upward. They who have turned many to righteousness are not only blessed in their own time, but they shine as stars for ever;—monuments of the greatness of the human mind and of the power of religion, they awaken in the bosoms of others the sparks of kindred excellence.

The works of the wicked do not perish with them. They live as beacons. "The censurers of the sinners against

their own souls" were to be preserved as a memorial against them (chap. xvi. 38). A mercy if their memory could quite perish, if their evil deeds could perish.

Balaam of this order: held up to perpetual infamy. A man of fine talents—even of prophetic illumination.

I. Remarks upon this exclamation as coming from the lips of such a man.

A man of talent, genius, acquirements, great influence over the minds of others; but not truly religious.

1. *That solemn thoughts of death and judgment may often occupy, though to little purpose, the minds of irreligious men.* They cannot hide from themselves the thoughts of mortality, nor the responsibility that follows it.

In the history of man, the last solved problem always produces a new one to solve. Three stages in the history of man—his birth—conversion—death.

We have an existence beyond death. Greatest men have died young. Alexander 33, Raffaele 30. The most pious attain elements of better nature and disposition.

After death no change—"my last end." Everything fixed at death, and for ever. This is the world of change, and of great and mighty possibilities. But when the ultimatum of life is over, all stand one unvaried, fixed, eternal character and destiny.

2. *That irreligious men are often constrained to bear a reluctant testimony in favour of religion, and against themselves.* God's love to His people is wonderful to their very enemies. "Who can count?" &c. So struck with the sight of their privileges, blessings, tents, goodly array, Balaam forgot to curse, was compelled to bless, and for once in his life to pray. Bad men envy the security and comfort of the righteous. "How many hired servants," &c. They know the worth of religion by its loss.

Perhaps that offender never lived who has not occasionally sighed to possess the mercies and blessings of the righteous. The system of irreligion that will do for health will not do for sickness. Speculations which amuse in life will not support in death.

3. *That men cheat themselves with the fallacy of wishing to die by a religion by which they are not willing to live.* This man calculated wisely for his dying hour; he ought to have calculated as wisely for his living ones. We must live by faith if we would die by it.

4. *That none go as far from God as those who fly in the face of their own convictions.* Balaam gave counsel black as the pit whence it sprung (comp. chap. xxv., and Rev. ii. 14).

II. Remarks upon this exclamation as replete with instruction to the people of God.

1. *Let this testimony confirm you in attachment to the religion you profess.* Proof that it is no cunning fable: it "is a faithful saying." "Wisdom is justified," &c. Cling with tenacity. Take the ground they give. Yield not to the claims of infidelity.

2. *Let it prompt to the cultivation of this righteousness.*

3. *Let it lighten life of its cares, and death of its terrors.*

4. *Let it prompt with compassion for irreligious men.*—Samuel Thodey.

## THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

(Verse 10.)

The text refers to—

I. A character that we must define—"the righteous."

None are such by nature; none are such by mere education, or parental discipline; none are such by self-exertion. This character is divine, and therefore of God. It includes—

1. *Justification.* By which, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are constituted righteous, and dealt with as such (Isa. xlv. 25; Rom. iii. 26).

2. *Regeneration.* Born from above; 454

born of God; "partakers of the Divine nature." This is the "new man;" the holy nature which the children of God possess (John iii. 3, seq.; Col. iii. 10).

3. *Sanctification;* or the progress of the new man in holiness; the spiritual growth and advancement of the Divine life. This includes also the consecration of the heart to the service and glory of God. An increasing conformity to the holy image of the blessed God (2 Cor. iii. 18).

4. *Practical obedience;* or righteous-



ness of life. This is the great evidence of righteousness of heart. The fruit testifies that the tree is made good; the stream, that the fountain has become pure. He only is righteous who doeth righteousness. Those who "have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him," following His example, treading in His imitable footsteps. (Rom. vi. 22).

II. An event that we must illustrate—"the death of the righteous."

Even the righteous must die. The righteous of all ages, except Enoch and Elijah, have died. "It is appointed unto men," &c. But the righteous die—

1. *Under the immediate direction of God.* The wicked often die prematurely—by their own hands; by the hands of the executioner; by the power of sin producing disease; by the judgments of God. But the righteous, in life, in sickness, in old age, are the especial objects of the Divine care. They are in His hand; and "precious in His sight is the death of His saints." When their work is done He calls them home. When they are meet for glory, he receives them to Himself.

2. *In a state of gracious security.* They die in covenant with God; with an interest in Christ; the subjects of the indwelling Spirit; heirs of glory. "Die in the Lord." "Death is theirs." Not an enemy to destroy; but a messenger to conduct them to their better home. Death cannot separate the saint from Jesus. The righteous often die—

3. *In ecstasy and triumph;* have "an abundant entrance ministered unto them," &c. Thus died Stephen, with the vision of glory before his eyes. Harken to the apostle, "I have fought a good fight," &c. So thousands and myriads. Death has been victory. "O death, where is thy sting?" &c. Thus Payson: "The battle is fought, and the victory is won." The righteous always at death—

4. *Enter upon a life of immortality.*

They are intimately present with the Lord. To die is gain, immediate, consummate, eternal gain. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," &c. Death is the gate of life—the vestibule of glory.

III. A desire that must be regulated.

"Let me die," &c. It is a very proper desire. Should be the desire of every human being. But it will be fruitless unless it is regulated—

1. *By a personal regard to the character of the righteous.* The character and the death are united; they cannot be separated. We cannot die their death if we are wicked, impenitent, merely moral, or only professors of righteousness. We must attain the spirit and principle of the righteous.

2. *By a preparation for dying.* This, by the righteous, cannot be forgotten. He therefore acts and prays and believes in reference to this solemn want. He is anxious to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man; to have the lamp and the oil, the title and the meetness. This is the only desire of any value.

3. *By a constant deference to the Divine will.* The righteous cannot suggest anything as to the mode, the place, or the circumstances of dying. They say, "My times are in Thy hand." They regard present duties and privileges, and leave all that concerns the act of dying in the Lord's hands. "All the days of my appointed time," &c. With God are the issues both of death and life.

Application.

1. *The subject of the text is solemn.* Dying is always a momentous thing, a great crisis in man's history, &c.

2. *What is your prospect respecting death?* I ask, not what you wish, but what is the well-grounded prospect?

3. *How different is the death of the wicked to that of the righteous!* Dark; the beginning of sorrows, &c. Oh! avoid this.—Jabez Burns, D.D.

## HOW TO DIE WELL.

(Verse 10.)

**I. How do the righteous die?**

1. In the favour of God.
2. In the love of Christ.
3. Tranquilly.
4. Fitted for heaven.

**II. How may we die this death?**

1. Repent.
2. Turn to God.
3. Believe on Christ.
4. Live righteously.—*W. W. Wythe.*

## PERSISTENCE IN THE PURSUIT OF A SINFUL PURPOSE.

(Verses 13-18.)

In these verses there are several important topics for illustration and application.

**I. A wicked persistence in the pursuit of an evil purpose.**

Both Balaam and Balak knew that God had prohibited the cursing of Israel (see ver. 8 and chap. xxii. 12); yet Balak is determined to have them cursed if possible. Notwithstanding that Balaam had blessed instead of cursing them, Balak will have him make another attempt, and under somewhat different conditions. "Balak said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (ver. 13). And Balaam, urged on by his cursed hunger for "the rewards of divination," is willing to serve Balak in this if he possibly can. This power of persistence in the pursuit of an object, if it had been worthily directed, might have led to great good; but in this case it is daringly and wickedly perverted. (a)

**II. A mischievous error as to man's power to curse his fellow-man.**

Balak thought that if Balaam's point of view were changed, and he saw but a small portion of the camp of Israel, he would then be able to curse them. Hence he "said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (vers. 13, 14). Balak was in error in this (see p. 424). And this error is a mischievous one. It has made men the dupes and the victims of witchcraft and priestcraft; it has hindered healthy mental and spiritual development, and

been a prolific cause of many and great evils. (b)

**III. A grievous error as to the nature of the Divine Being.**

Balaam and Balak seem to have thought that God might be induced to change His mind, by their sacrifices. For the second time they "built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram upon every altar." They regarded Him as a being who might be bribed by their gifts, or prevailed upon by their importunities. The language of God, by the Psalmist, is applicable to them: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as Thyself." How dishonouring to God is such a view of His nature! In certain forms this error survives to this day, and that in Christendom. (c)

**IV. An illustration of the communication of the message of God to an ungodly man.**

Balaam "said unto Balak, stand here by the burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder. And the Lord met Balaam," &c. (vers. 15, 16).

1. *God has access to the minds of wicked men.* Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 1-36), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii.), Balaam, iv. are examples. (d)

2. *God can use wicked men for the accomplishment of His own purposes.* In this way He used Balaam. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee," &c.

**V. An illustration of the attention with which Divine communications should be received.**

"And when he came to him, behold,

he stood by his burnt offering, &c. (vers. 17, 18). Balak was standing by his burnt offering, yet Balaam said to him, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor." It was a summons to thoughtful and

earnest attention to the Word of God, which he was about to speak to him. Not with listless ear and lethargic mind should Divine messages be heard, but with eager attention and thoughtful consideration. (c)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There are single acts of sin, and continued or repeated acts of sin; sins committed after convictions, promises, and resolutions. Now there is not so much of guilt in a single act of sin, as there is in a continued and repeated course of sin, called (Dent. xxix. 19) "adding drunkenness to thirst," and (Isa. xxx. 1) "adding sin to sin." For as it is in numbering, so it is in sinning; if the first figure be 1, the second is 10, the third 100, the fourth 1000, and every addition makes a greater multiplication. O, what a dreadful reckoning will there be hereafter for the consciences of poor sinners!—*Flavel*.

(b) When the confessor of Louis XIV. said, "With my God in my hand and my king at my knee, I am greater than any monarch on the earth," he gave utterance to no idle boast. He only expressed, somewhat more epigrammatically, what every priest would claim in his soberest moments. In his *Catéchisme de la Persévérance*, Gaume says, "The priest, mighty as God, can, in one moment, snatch the sinner from hell, and render him worthy of Paradise, and from a slave of the devil make him a son of Abraham, and God Himself is bound to adhere to the judgment of the priest. The sentence of the priest precedes: God has only to sign it." Such are the well-known assumptions of Rome.—*Literary World*.

When John Knox began the work of reform in Glasgow, the idea prevailed that if a heretic should but touch the great bell in the church there, he would be struck dead instantly. He accepted the test on condition that the bell should be lowered into the street. He declared that it should either kill him, or he it. Then he stood over it, anathematized the church of Rome, the pope, and the wicked priests. The superstitious crowd looked in vain to see the bold heretic fall dead. Instead, men armed with hammers, at Knox's order, broke the bell into fragments. Thus a great imposture was detected, Romanism defeated, and Protestantism established.—*Dict. of Illust.*

For another illustration on *Superstition* see pp. 425, 426.

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 447.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 426, 427.

(e) Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pre-

tence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since the public ministry possesses, with regard to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages. Besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidently predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, "and go his way and straightway forget what manner of man he was." If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety, the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word: but while everything around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner, is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

Hear the Word with *attention*. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly, but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as



dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity: it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to

attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.—*Ibid.*

**BALAAH'S SECOND PARABLE: THE CONSTITUENTS AND THE IRREVERSIBLENESS  
OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF ISRAEL.**

(Verses 19-24.)

Notice—

I. The constituents of the blessedness of Israel.

Balaam pronounced the Israelites blessed because of—

1. *Their covenant relation with God.* "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen distress in Israel." See *Critical and Explanatory Notes* on this verse. God cannot curse His chosen people. He must bless them with His favour and with all covenant blessings. So long as they do not utterly forsake Him He will protect and bless them. (a)

2. *The presence of God with them.* "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." Here are two ideas:—(1) God was present with them as their King. The government of Israel was a theocracy. Jehovah Himself was their sovereign. (2) His presence produced exultation. "The shout of a King" is the jubilant celebration by Israel of the presence of Jehovah in their midst as their King. His presence was a guarantee of success in their great enterprise, of victory over their enemies, &c. God is still with His people as their King and their God. (b)

3. *The doings of God for them.* "God brought them out of Egypt." Keil and Del. translate: "God brings them out of Egypt;" and remark that "the participle is not used for the preterite, but designates the leading out as still going on, and lasting till the introduction into Canaan." Looked at in this light, the clause before us refers to the

whole of God's doings for them, by means of which they were led forth from Egypt, and ultimately brought into the Promised Land. It includes:—(1) Emancipation from Egypt. (2) Direction in their journeys. (3) Protection from their enemies. (4) Provision in the wilderness. (5) Possession of Canaan. And in this Christian dispensation God works graciously and gloriously in and for His people. He delivers from a bondage far worse than that of Israel in Egypt, &c.

4. *The revelation of His will to them.* "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob," &c. (ver. 23). Margin: "in Jacob." See the translation and note by Keil and Del. in *Critical and Explanatory Notes*. We take the verse to mean that the art of the soothsayer was not practised amongst the Israelites; but God Himself, by means of His own appointment, and in due season, revealed to them His own designs and doings. He communicated with them through the high priest by means of the Urim and Thummim; He spake by Moses, and afterwards by the Prophets and the sacred poets. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." The teachings of Christ and His apostles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are granted to the spiritual Israel in this age.

5. *The victorious power He bestows upon them.* "He hath as it were the strength of a buffalo," or a wild bull. "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down

until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Because Jehovah was with them as their King and Leader, they went forward with the strength of a wild ox—an indomitable animal, and terrible by reason of its horns (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 17; Psa. xxii. 21). And when they arose to battle they would not retreat until they had obtained complete victory. They would conquer their enemies, and take possession of the Promised Land. Let Balak, then, be warned, and abandon the vain hope of vanquishing this victorious and blessed people. And God's spiritual Israel shall conquer all their spiritual enemies, and take possession of that inheritance of which Canaan, even at best, was but a poor type. "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

## II. The irreversibleness of the blessedness of Israel.

The blessedness of the people of God cannot be reversed because—

1. *It rests upon the unchangeableness of God.* "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent," &c. (c)

2. *It is beyond the power of their enemies.* "Behold, I have received to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." All the sacrifices which Balak the king could offer, and all the arts which Balaam the soothsayer could exercise, would not turn aside the blessing of God from His people. No power either in earth or in hell can effectually curse those whom God hath blessed.

### Conclusion.

1. *Are we members of the spiritual Israel of God?*

2. *Let us, then, be faithful to our covenant engagements, and rejoice in our privileges.*

3. *Let those who are aliens from the spiritual Israel believe in Christ Jesus and share its blessedness* (Eph. ii. 12).

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The new covenant exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with Divine precepts: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1), i.e., sincere. What is hearty in our actions, is accepted; and what is defective, is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our Surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin; the services of a person under sentence of death, are but dead services: this accepts our imperfect services, after faith in it; that administered no strength to obey, but supposed it; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). Again, in regard of the promises: the old covenant had good, but the new hath "better promises" (Heb. viii. 6), of justification after guilt, and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first, there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it; provision against filth, but none for the cleansing of it; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that "life and immortality" in heaven, "brought to light by the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Life

indeed was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed, to be reserved for him, if he stood. As it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts; comforts more choice, and comforts more durable; an "everlasting consolation and a good hope" are the fruits of "grace," i.e. the covenant of grace (2 Thess. ii. 16). In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed; the Apostle leaves it to every man's mind to conceive it, if he could, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). It instates us in such a manner of the love of God as He bears to His Son the image of His Person (John xvii. 23): "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."—*Charnocke*.

(b) As He gave the blood of His Son to seal the covenant, so He gave Himself as the blessing of the covenant: "He is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. xi. 16). He is not only our God, but our God as He is the God of Christ: He is not ashamed to be our property, and Christ is not ashamed to own His people in a partnership with Him in this property (John xx. 17), "I ascend to My God, and your God." This, of God's being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises; in this He hath promised, whatsoever is infinite in Him, whatsoever is

the glory and ornament of His nature, for our use; not a part of Him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigour and strength of all. . . . Thus, God's being ours, is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own dispose; it makes "all things that God hath ours" (1 Cor. iii. 22); and, therefore, not only all things that He hath created, but all things that He can create; not only all things that He hath contrived, but all things that he can contrive; for in being ours, His power is ours, His possible power as well as His active power; His power, whereby He can effect more than He hath done, and His wisdom, whereby He can contrive more than He hath done; so that if there were need of employing His power to create many worlds for our good, He would not stick at it, for if He did, He would not be our God, in the extent of His nature, as the promise intimates.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations of the Blessedness of the People of God, see pp. 154, 346, 347.

(c) Independent of all possible beings and events, Jehovah sits at the head of the universe, unchanged, and incapable of change, amid all the successions, tossings and tumults, by which it is agitated. When empires are overthrown, or angels fall; when suns are extinguished, and systems return to their original nothing: He is equally impassive and unmoved as when sparrows expire, or the hair falls from our heads. Nothing can happen,

nothing can be done beyond His expectation, or without His permission. Nothing can frustrate His designs, and nothing disappoint or vary His purposes. All things, beside Him, change, and fluctuate without ceasing. Events exist and vanish. Beings rise and expire. But His own existence, the thoughts which He entertains, the desires which He admits, the purposes which He forms, are "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Throughout the coming vast of eternity also, and the boundless tracts of immensity, He sees with serene complacency His own perfect purposes daily and invariably advancing, with a regular fulfilment, towards their absolute completion. In its own place, in its own time, and in its own manner, each exists in exact obedience to His order, and in exact accordance with His choice; nothing lingers, nothing hastens; but His counsel exactly stands, and all His pleasure will be precisely accomplished.—*Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

"What makes you think that God will never forsake them that trust in Him?" was asked of an aged Christian. "Because He has promised," was the reply. "And what makes you think that He will keep His word?" "Because He never yet broke it." Here is encouragement for us all! Here is cause to cry aloud, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The past declares God's faithfulness, the present confirms it, and the future will only make more clear His fidelity and truth.—*Anon.*

### THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF JEHOVAH.

(Verse 19.)

To unfold the full meaning of these words, we observe—

I. Some men think that God will lie.

God has told us, with strong and repeated asseverations, that "we must be born again" (John iii. 7); but this is totally disbelieved by—

1. *The profane.* They persuade themselves that such strictness in religion, as is implied in the new birth, is not necessary; and that they shall go to heaven in their own way.

2. *The self-righteous.* These consider regeneration as a dream of weak enthusiasts; and are satisfied with the "form of godliness, without" ever experiencing "the power" of it.

3. *The hypocritical professors of religion.* These, having changed their creed, together with their outward conduct, fancy themselves Christians,

notwithstanding their faith neither "overcomes the world," nor "works by love," nor "purifies their hearts."

That all these persons think God will lie, is evident beyond a doubt; for if they really believed that old things must pass away and all things become new (2 Cor. v. 17), before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven, they would feel concerned to know whether any such change had taken place in them; nor would they be satisfied till they had a Scriptural evidence that they were indeed "new creatures in Christ Jesus." But as this is in no respect the case with them, it is manifest that they do not believe the record of God, and, consequently, however harsh the expression may seem, they make God a liar (1 John v. 10).



## II. Others fear He may lie.

This is common with persons—

1. *Under conviction of sin.* When men are deeply convinced of sin, they find it exceedingly difficult to rest simply on the promises of the Gospel; such as John vi. 37; Isa. i. 18; lv. 1. This appears too good to be true: they cannot conceive how God should “justify the ungodly” (Rom. iv. 5), and therefore they seek to become godly first, in order that they may be justified: and if they cannot bring some price in their hands, they keep back, and give themselves over to desponding fears.

2. *Under temptation or desertion.* God has declared that He will not suffer His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). But when they come into temptation, they are apt to say, as David, “I shall one day perish,” &c. (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). They see no way for their escape; and therefore they fear that the very next wave will overwhelm them utterly. If God at such seasons hide His face from them, they conclude, “there is no hope;” they think “His mercy clean gone for ever,” &c. (Psa. lxxvii. 7-9), notwithstanding God has so frequently and so expressly declared, that He will never leave them nor forsake them.

Now these persons do not, like the ungodly, deliberately *think* that God *will* lie; but they have many *fears* lest He *should*; if it were not so, they would take God at His word, and stay themselves on Him when they are in darkness (Isa. l. 10).

## III. But God neither will nor can lie.

1. *He will not lie.* (1) Let us hear the testimonies of those who have tried Him. Moses (Deut. xxxii. 4); Joshua (John xxiii. 14); Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 29). (2) Let us attend to God’s own assertions and appeals. Isa. v. 4; xlix. 19. Would He ever venture to speak thus strongly on His own behalf, if His creatures could make good their accusations against Him? (3) Let us look to matter of fact. He threatened

to punish the angels if they should prove disobedient: He denounced a curse on Adam if he should eat of the forbidden tree; He threatened to destroy the whole world with a deluge; to overwhelm Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone; and to scatter His once chosen people over the face of the whole earth. See now whether he has forborne to execute any of these threatenings. He also promised to send His only, dear Son to die for sinners; and to make Him great among the Gentiles, while His own nation should almost universally reject Him. Have either of these promises been forgotten? Or, if such promises and such threatenings have received their accomplishment, is there any reason to doubt respecting any others that are yet unfulfilled? Are not His past actions so many types and pledges of what He will hereafter perform? (2 Pet. ii. 4-9; Jude 7.)

2. *He cannot lie.* Truth is as essential to the Divine nature as goodness, wisdom, power, or any other attribute; so that He can as easily cease to be good, or wise, or powerful, as He can suffer one jot or tittle of His word to fail. If for one moment He could divest Himself of truth, He would cease to be deserving of all confidence or affection. Let it only be said of any *man*—“he is great and wise and generous, but no dependence can be placed on his word,” would he not on the whole be deemed a contemptible character? How then would Jehovah be degraded, if any such infirmity could be laid to His charge! “God cannot lie” (Tit. i. 2); “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. ii. 13); “It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. vi. 18). It is God’s honour that He neither will nor can lie.

Infer,—

1. *How vain are the expectations of unconverted men!* Men, whatever may be their state, persuade themselves that they shall be happy when they die. But how delusive must be that hope, which is built upon the expectation that God will prove Himself

a liar! Let us lay aside all such delusive hopes, &c.

2. *How groundless are the fears of the converted!* There is a holy fear that is highly desirable for every one, however eminent, however established. But there is a tormenting, slavish fear that arises from unbelief, and which greatly retards our progress in the Divine life. Now we ask, Does this fear arise from an apprehension of our own unfaithfulness, or of God's? If it be God's faithfulness that we doubt, let us know that His "gifts and callings are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29, with the words following the text), and that where He hath begun a good work, He will perfect it unto the day of

Christ (Phil. i. 6). If, on the other hand, we suspect our own faithfulness, let us recollect on whom our faithfulness depends (2 Cor. iii. 5; Zech. iv. 6). God has promised not only that He will not depart from us, but that He will put His fear in our hearts, so that we shall not depart from Him (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40).

Let us then "set to our seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). Let us commit ourselves to Him, knowing Whom we have believed (2 Tim. i. 12), and assured that while we stand on the foundation of His Word, we are immovably secure (2 Tim. ii. 19).—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

### THE VERACITY OF GOD.

(Verse 19.)

#### Introduction—

Remarks on the character of Balaam, and the circumstances that led to the utterance of his prophecy.

#### I. Here is a purpose pre-supposed.

1. He saw Israel as the objects of the Divine protection, so that all the devices of their enemies were rendered vain.

2. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the face of all opposition.

3. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the tokens of the Divine presence and power with which they were accompanied.

II. The ground of this stability asserted.

1. God *Himself* is unchangeable.
2. He is so in His will and purpose.
3. There is no cause why God should alter. Three causes of change of mind in man not applicable to God:—(1) Want of foreknowledge. (2) Natural instability. (3) Want of power.

#### III. Inferences.

1. The perpetual obligation of religion.
2. Reproof of the inconstancy of man.
3. It directs us where alone we may safely put our trust.
4. It teaches patience under His providences.
5. An awful warning to sinners.—*Anon.*

### GOD'S BLESSING IRREVERSIBLE.

(Verse 20.)

The text is connected with three illustrious orders of persons: Balak, king of Moab; Balaam, the wicked prophet; and the Israelites, who were journeying to the Land of Promise. Balak hated the Israelites, and was anxious to bring evil, &c. Balaam

hired himself to curse them; but God frustrated his evil design, and out of the lips hired to curse, God pronounced a blessing. Here is the wicked prophet's confession, "He hath blessed," &c.

I. God's people are blessed of Him. So it was with Israel of old. God

blessed them by wonderful deliverances, and countless tokens of his favour. His compassionate eye was on them in Egypt; His arm led them out; His bounty supplied their wants; His presence guided—shielded them, &c. God has now His Israel in the world: all the spiritual seed of Abraham; all those who have believed in the Messiah; all who are travelling to a better country. On these His blessing rests. “He hath blessed”—

1. *With pardoning mercy.*
2. *With delivering grace.*
3. *With spiritual supplies.*
4. *With all needful good.*

Now this applies to every age of the world—to every true Israelite.

II. His blessing cannot be reversed.

1. *Wicked men would, but cannot.*
2. *Satan would, but cannot.*
3. *God does not desire to do so, and therefore will not.*

We may reject the blessing—backslide from God; but His “gifts and calling are without repentance.”

Application.

1. *Are we His people?*
2. *Then we have His blessing.*
3. *And this is all-sufficient.*—*Jabes Burns, D.D.*

## THE STABILITY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS.

(Verse 23.)

We cannot but admire the endowments of this bold, bad man: we envy him the privilege he enjoyed of beholding the visions of the Almighty, and being favoured with His express communications; we look with astonishment at the perseverance which he manifested, worthy of a better cause; and we may allow ourselves to be charmed with his eloquence and edified by his prophetic anticipations. But when we have done this, there remains an awful contrast of warning: gloomy shades darken and deform a picture, some of the features of which appear clothed in the beauty and brightness of heaven. We see the loftiest qualifications of which human nature can boast—genius, literature, a great name, and even prophetic skill, devoted to the most execrable purposes, employed in direct opposition to God and His Church, and finally recoiling upon their possessor and drowning his soul in perdition. Like many in our own day, Balaam sees the good, but prefers the evil; he pursues the world, and turns his back upon God, in spite of the appearance of the Angel, the remonstrance of conscience, and the immediate voice of Heaven; he makes religion the cloak of the most ambitious purposes; he

numbers himself with those who “love the wages of unrighteousness,” and upon whose tombs God Himself has written the epitaph,—“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved,” &c.

I. The stability of the church is distinctly asserted.

What was true 3,000 years ago, is not worthy of less credit and less attention now. The times are changed, but the men are not. There is now as certain a combination against the Church of the Living God, as there was when Balaam took up his parable, and Balak listened for the curse upon Israel. But while the enemies remain the same, the promise remains unchanged. Every age has heard the cry, “Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.” But then every age has heard the language, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. What a confession is this of Balaam! how humiliating to himself, how instructive to us! Trace the particulars.

1. *The most base and desperate measures have always been used against the church.* Balaam evidently avows that the mean arts of divination and enchantment had been used. He acknowledges, in fact, that the church's enemies could not meet her in the open



field. Curses are the last resource of cowards—a confession of weakness. And so it has always been. Infidelity is not ashamed to use poisoned weapons—to stoop to the meanest devices to harass a cause which it is always ashamed to face. Some men have so great a hatred to the cause of Christ, that they will condescend to seek help from hell itself rather than fail. Hence every stratagem is employed; all the arts of calumny, and wickedness, and falsehood, are put in requisition to prevent the progress of truth and poison the mind against it. How weak that cause must be which stoops to such wretched devices! and how triumphant and glorious must that religion be, which, though unarmed, can defy them all! “The rains descended . . . and it fell not,” &c.

2. *These attacks are utterly fruitless and vain.* “There is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. The enemies of the truth, however loudly they may boast at the onset, have always retired in confusion, and for the most part in despair. It is like shooting arrows against the sun: they return upon the heads of those who aimed them, while the sun pursues its glorious way uninjured and undisturbed. It is like attempting to stem the ocean with a bulrush: you may perish in the attempt, but you cannot hope to succeed. Let those who hate the truth, consider by whom that truth is supported—how long that truth has stood—how often it has been assailed, and how certain the overthrow of its enemies. Like Job’s leviathan, “the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold,” &c. “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?” &c. “If this counsel or this work be of man, it will come to nought,” &c. (Acts v. 38, 39).

3. *The source of Israel’s safety is directly ascribed to God.* “What hath God wrought!” The world is right in its estimate of the feebleness of the Church of Christ in herself. We wonder not at their boasts, their scorn.

We wonder not to hear them say, “What do these feeble Jews?” We know she is a bruised reed; but we also know that she is strong in the strength of Another. It is delightful to hear from an enemy—(1) the faithfulness of God advanced as the security of the church (ver. 19). (2) The impotency of his own arts acknowledged. “I cannot reverse it” (ver. 20). (3) The mercy of God asserted as the comfort of His people (ver. 21). (4) The records of antiquity explored to confirm the position (ver. 22). Futurity opened up as disclosing their triumphs (ver. 24).

How is all this confirmed by the history of that very moment! Israel was resting in his tents, ignorant of the plotting of Balak and the prophecy of Balaam. Moses knew nothing of it while all this mischief was going on. But God is both a sure and a secret friend. He restrains countless evils of which we know nothing. “He that keepeth thee will not slumber,” &c.

4. *The season of our greatest dangers becomes the date of our noblest triumphs.* “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob,” &c. God delays till the hour of extremity.

5. *Our best blessings are frequently pronounced by our worst enemies.* How cheering is it to observe this—the enemies with one breath pronouncing our stability, with the next their own overthrow. “There shall come a star out of Jacob,” &c. A volume might be filled with the confessions of the enemy. “Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

II. The security of believers follows on the same principles.

They are exposed to similar attacks. The world tries its enchantments. False friends and real enemies endeavor to hinder,—watch for our halting, &c. Satan tempts, opposes, &c.

The same promises are our supports. Condescend to learn of an enemy. God’s simple word was enough for Balaam. Apply it to our experiences in life, to death.—*Samuel Thodey.*

## BALAAM'S DECLARATION OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

(Verse 23.)

How true is the text of Israel of old. No evil spirit of enchantment could affect them. No spirit of divination injure them. The magicians of Egypt could mimic Moses, but only in adding to the misery of the Egyptians; but neither earth nor hell can injure those who trust in the Lord; "for He is their help and shield."

Applying our text to the Church of God in general, consider—

## 1. The important truth affirmed.

"Surely there is no enchantment," &c. We enter not into the discussion how far men may have had power to enchant, to divine, or to curse others. But we abide by the text, that there is no such thing against the cause and people of God. Hell is opposed to the cause of God, and united with it are the wicked powers of earth. They have the disposition, the will, the purpose, and may make the attempt to injure the Church; but their efforts must fail, their plots must be frustrated, their attacks must be powerless. Yet sometimes they have been allowed to harass and vex and torture the people of God. Sometimes they have apparently succeeded and triumphed; but really and eventually, they must be frustrated. "Surely there is no enchantment," &c. Now the certainty of this may be inferred—

1. *Because the counsels of God are more than sufficient to baffle the designs and plots of hell.* We would not array human skill and tact against the wiles and stratagems of the devil. But the security of the Church depends on the counsels of God—on the influence and wisdom of the Most High. He knows how to frustrate the devices of evil; and how to deliver those who trust in His name. Hell has no covering before Him. He is the watcher and keeper of Israel, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2. *Because the power of Jehovah is ever effectual in resisting the attacks of*

*the enemies of His people.* Divine wisdom and omniscience are united with resistless power. His mandate gave being to the universe. "He spake, and it was." All created power is mere impotency before Him. How then can the power of evil ruin the Church, and overthrow the cause of the Eternal?

3. *Because Divine goodness is more than enough to counteract the malevolence of the Church's foes.* The wisdom and power of God are combined with immeasurable love. The interests of the Church are those of God's heart. His people are as the apple of His eye. He has covenanted with them to sustain, to keep, to preserve, to deliver, to glorify.

4. *The resources of God are more than adequate to render all the means of the Church's enemies abortive.* The enemy can combine various elements of evil. The craft, subtlety, and power of fallen legions—the wealth and influence of the world—the fashions of the earth, &c. And all these have successively been employed. But all resources are Jehovah's. The angels of His presence, the stars of heaven, the sun, and the moon, storms and winds, and tempests, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. He often makes the wrath of man to praise Him. On these grounds we may say, "Surely there is no enchantment," &c.

II. The triumphant exclamation uttered.

"According to this time it shall be said," &c. Observe:

1. *What is to be said.* "What hath God wrought!" All deliverances, &c., are to be traced up to God. Agency may be observed; but God only praised. God alone is to have the glory, as He has had the real work of delivering His people. (1) This is to keep up our dependence on God. (2) To inspire with admiration and praise. (3) To keep human nature in its right place. Not

what Moses, or Joshua, or Gideon, or David, or the apostles, or the martyrs, or the reformers, or Wesley, or Whitfield; but "what God hath wrought." There is a tendency to lose sight of God, or to make Him secondary. But it ought ever to be, "What hath God wrought!"

2. *Who are to say it.* Sometimes even enemies have said it. Balak was forced to see it, and the covetous prophet to speak it. (1) But it should be said especially by the ministers of the Gospel. They are to draw attention to the doings of Jehovah—to "speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power," &c. (2) It should be said by all the pious. Parents to their children. Teachers to their pupils. Christians to one another. Thus the Psalmist, lxxvii. 11, &c., Isa. xii. 4, &c.

3. *When it should be said.* (1) In times of depression as a means of en-

couragement. (2) In times of great exertion as an incitement to perseverance. (3) In times of great success, to give tone to our exultings. (4) It will be reiterated in the world of the beatified for ever. Then they will see in one beautiful series the doings of God,—behold the golden chain entire, &c.

#### Application.

1. *Our text may apply to many as to their Christian experience before God.* Remember all the way God hath led you, &c. What great things He hath done for you.

2. *May it not apply to this Christian Church and congregation?* What hath God wrought here for you, in you, by you? &c.

3. *Let God ever be exalted by His Church and people for the blessings they enjoy, and all the good done in them, and by them.*—Jabes Burns, D.D.

### THE BLESSINGS OF GOD, AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WHICH IT DEMANDS.

(Verse 23, latter portion.)

"According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!"

The text directs us to—

I. The source of effectual blessing.

It directs us to the Deity, in His essential character; in His active character; and in His relative character. And what is the interference we wish? Various. Sometimes—

1. *Deliverance*—from danger internal and external—"enchantment."

2. *Blessing.* "I have received commandment to bless," &c.

3. *Forbearance.* "He hath not beheld iniquity," &c.

4. *Stability.* "The Lord his God is with him."

5. *Complete success.*

II. The time from which His interposition is remarked.

"According to this time it shall be said." The time of—

1. *Conversion.*

2. *Renewed devotion.*

3. *Peculiar providential arrangement.*

4. *Earnest and decisive spirit of prayer.*

III. The acknowledgment it demands.

"It shall be said, What hath God wrought!"

1. *Acknowledgment is implied and expected.* "God wrought."

2. *It is spontaneously offered.* "It shall be said."

3. *It is a personal and explicit token.* "Jacob and Israel."

4. *It is to be recorded and gratefully renewed.* "According to this time it shall be said," &c.—Samuel Thodey.

(Verses 25 and 26.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes on ver. 25, and Homiletical remarks on vers. 11, 12.

(Verses 27—30.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes and Homiletical remarks on vers. 1, 2, 13, 14, and Explanatory Note on ver. 25.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *To seek for enchantments.*  
See Notes on chap. xxiii. 3, 23.

*He set his face toward the wilderness,* i.e., towards the plains of Moab, where the Israelites were encamped.

Verse 2. *Saw Israel abiding, &c.*  
Keil and Del.: "He saw Israel encamping according to its tribes."

*The Spirit of God came upon him.*  
"The impression made upon him by the sight of the tribes of Israel, served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him. Of both the earlier utterances it is stated that 'Jehovah put a word into his mouth' (chap. xxiii. 5, 16); but of this third it is affirmed that 'the Spirit of God came over him.' The former were communicated to him, where he went out for a Divine revelation, without his being thrown into an ecstatic state; he heard the voice of God within him telling him what he was to say. But this time, like the prophets in their prophesying, he was placed by the Spirit of God in a state of ecstatic sight; so that, with his eyes closed as in clairvoyance, he saw the substance of the revelation from God with his inward mental eye, which had been opened by the Spirit of God."—Keil and Del.

Verse 3. *Whose eyes are open.*  
Margin: "Who had his eyes shut, but now opened." Dr. A. Clarke takes the latter view: "I believe the original שָׁתָם, *shethum*, should be translated *shut*, not *open*; for in the next verse, where the opening of the eyes is mentioned, a widely different word is used גָּלָה, *galah*, which signifies to *open* or *reveal*. At first the eyes of Balaam were *shut*, and so closely too that he could not see the angel who withstood him, till God opened his eyes; nor could he see the gracious intentions of God towards Israel, till the eyes of his understanding were opened by the power of the Divine Spirit."

H H 2

שָׁתָם הָעֵינַן, "with closed eye.

שָׁתָם does not mean to open, a meaning in support of which only one passage of the *Mishnah* can be adduced, but to close, like סָתַם in Dan. viii. 26, and שָׁתַם in Lam. iii. 8, with the ש softened into ס or ש. 'Balaam describes himself as the man with closed eye with reference to his state of ecstasy, in which the closing of the outer senses went hand in hand with the opening of the inner' (*Hengstenberg*). The cessation of all perception by means of the outer senses, so far as self-conscious reflection is concerned, was a feature that was common to both the vision and the dream, the two forms in which the prophetic gift manifested itself (chap. xii. 6), and followed from the very nature of the inward intuition. In the case of prophets whose spiritual life was far advanced, inspiration might take place without any closing of the outward senses. But upon men like Balaam, whose inner religious life was still very impure and undeveloped, the Spirit of God could only operate by closing their outward senses to impressions from the lower earthly world, and raising them up to visions of the higher and spiritual world."—Keil and Del.

Fuerst however renders שָׁתָם הָעֵינַן, "opened of eye, i.e., with opened eye." So also the *Speaker's Comm. et al.*

Verse 4. *Falling, &c.* Omit the "into a trance" of the A.V. Keil and Del. translate, "Falling down and with opened eyes." Balaam fell beneath the power of the Spirit of God, who came upon him (comp. 1 Sam. xix. 24). In this way the eyes of his spirit were opened.

Verse 7. *He shall pour the water, &c.* Or, "Water will flow out of his buckets." Or, "He shall stream with water out of his buckets." An image of great prosperity; an abundant supply of

water being essential to fertility and prosperity in the burning East. "The nation is personified as a man carrying two pails overflowing with water."

*His seed, i.e., posterity.*

"*By many waters,*" a metaphor indicative of rich blessings, particularly in this place, that of a numerous posterity.

*Agag*, a title common to all the Amalekite kings, as *Pharaoh* was to those of Egypt. "The reason for mentioning the king of the Amalekites was, that he was selected as the impersonation of the enmity of the world against the kingdom of God, which culminated in the kings of the heathen; the Amalekites having been the first heathen tribe that attacked the Israelites on their journey to Canaan (Exod. xvii. 8)" —*Keil and Del.*

*His king . . . . his kingdom.* "The king of Israel, whose greatness was celebrated by Balaam, was neither the Messiah exclusively, nor the earthly kingdom without the Messiah, but the kingdom of Israel that was established by David, and was exalted in the Messiah into an everlasting kingdom, the enemies of which would all be made its footstool (Psa. ii. and cx.)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 8. See chap. xxiii. 22.

Verse 9. See chap. xxiii. 24.

Verse 11. *Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour.* "A bitter and impious sarcasm."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 14. *Advertise thee.* Keil and Del.: "'Tell thee advisedly.' . . . An announcement which includes advice."

Verse 17. *A Star, &c.* "In all the typical language of Scripture stars are symbols of lordship and authority, ecclesiastical or civil. Thus a star is the symbol of the highest dominion of all: 'There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob;' and the actual birth of Him whom Balaam prophesied of here, is announced by a star (Matt. ii. 2; cf. Isa. xiv. 12)."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

*A Sceptre, &c.* (comp. Gen. xlix. 10).

*The corners of Moab.* Rather, "the two sides of Moab," "equivalent to Moab on both sides, from one end to the other."

*Destroy all the children of Sheth.*

*Speaker's Comm.*: "Overthrow the sons of tumult." Keil and Del.: "'Destroy all the sons of confusion,' by which the Moabites are to be understood as being men of wild, warlike confusion."

Verse 18. *Edom shall be a possession, &c.* "Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power" (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Chron. xviii. 11-13; Obad. 17 sqq.).

Verse 19. *He that shall have dominion, i.e., the ruler foretold as Star and Sceptre.* "The Star and Sceptre of the prophecy, like the 'Sceptre' and 'Lawgiver' of Gen. xlix. 10, point naturally rather to a line of princes than to an individual; or rather are emblems of the kingdom of Israel generally. Thus the victories of David and his successors, generation after generation, over Edom and Moab, are unquestionably recurring and progressive accomplishments of what Balaam foretold; but after all of them the prophecy yet reaches forward to some further and culminating accomplishment; and that too in 'the latter days' (ver. 14), the ordinary prophetic designation for the time of the Messiah (cf. Dan. x. 14).

"To a Christian, the connection between the Star and Sceptre of Balaam, and the Star of the King of the Jews, which the wise men saw (Matt. ii. 2), is self-evident. As they were 'wise men from the east,' so was Balaam also a 'wise man from the east' (cf. xxiii. 7); and the tradition that they were, if not descendants, yet fellow countrymen, of Balaam, and occupied in pursuits kindred to his, is probable enough." —*Speaker's Comm.*

*Destroy him that remaineth, &c.* "The phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives till he has out off all of every place (cf. 1 Kings xi. 16)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *Amalek was the first, &c., i.e., pre-eminent amongst the states or nations which Balaam then had in view of his mind's eye.* The sense given by the marginal rendering is doubtful.

Verse 21. *The Kenites.* "A tribe or nation whose history is strangely inter-

woven with that of the chosen people. Their origin is hidden from us. But we may fairly infer that they were a branch of the larger nation of Midian—from the fact that Jethro, the father of Moses's wife, who in the records of Exodus (see ii. 15, 16; iv. 19, &c.), is represented as dwelling in the land of Midian, and as priest or prince of that nation, is in the narrative of Judges (i. 16; iv. 11), as distinctly said to have been a Kenite. As Midianites, they were therefore descended immediately from Abraham by his wife Keturah, and in this relationship and their connexion with Moses we find the key to their continued alliance with Israel.”—*Bible Dict.*

Verse 22. *The Kenite.* Heb.: *Kain*. The *Speaker's Comm.* says that *Kain* is “the name of the Kenites abode.” Keil and Del.: “*Kain*, the tribe-father, is used poetically for the *Kenite*, the tribe of which he was the founder.” And Fuerst regards it as the name of the tribe. A more faithful rendering of this verse is, “For Kain shall not be destroyed until Asshur shall carry

him away captive.” It is a promise of long-continued safety to the Kenites.

Verse 23. *Alas, who shall live, &c.* “The words, ‘Woe, who will live,’ point to the fearfulness of the following judgment, which went deep to the heart of the seer, because it would fall upon the sons of his own people. The meaning is, ‘Who will preserve his life in the universal catastrophe that is coming?’ (*Hengstenberg.*)”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 24. *Chitim*, “i.e. Cyprus, the nearest of the western islands, the only one visible from Palestine, and so the representative to Balaam and to Israel of all those unknown western regions across the Mediterranean Sea, from which were at length to come the conquerors of the mighty empires of the East (cf. Isa. xxiii. 1, 12; Jer. ii. 10).”—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Eber*, “i.e., not as Vulg. and LXX., ‘the Hebrews,’ but generally the descendants of Shem.”—*Ibid.*

*He also*, “i.e., the conqueror of Asshur and Eber, who should come across the sea.”—*Ibid.*

### BALAAH'S THIRD PARABLE: THE GLORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 1-9.)

This paragraph contains two main divisions:

I. The preparation of the prophet to declare the divine will (vers. 1-4).

1. *Balaam renounces the search for auguries.* “And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments.” The sacrifices were offered as at former times, but Balaam goes no more apart to look for auguries. He seems to have despaired of accomplishing the desire of Balak by any exercise of his art.

2. *He beholds the encampment of Israel.* “He set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel encamping according to their tribes.” He seems to have gazed on the imposing spectacle

beneath him, and to have allowed it freely to influence him. Its order, unity, vastness, and might, seem to have deeply impressed him. And the impression produced by that sight “served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him.”

3. *He is inspired by the Holy Spirit.* “And the Spirit of God came upon him” (see Critical and Explanatory Notes on ver. 2). He had, as Attersoll remarks, “the Holy Spirit, but not the spirit of holiness; for wheresoever He worketh He is holy, but He doth not always work holiness and sanctification, which evermore accompany salvation.” Balaam was inspired to utter the Divine message; but his heart was perverse and corrupt, &c.



4. *He hears Divine words and sees Divine visions.* "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man with closed eye hath said: he hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling down and with opened eyes" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes on vers. 3, 4). The senses of Balaam now seem to be closed to external impressions, and, for the time being, the Spirit of God has the mastery of his nature, and by voice and by vision reveals the will of God to him. Thus the Lord prepared him for the declaration of His holy will. Do not these words of Balaam display his egotism and pride in his own privileges and power? Keil and Del. hold that they do not. "This introduction to his prophecy is not an utterance of boasting vanity; but, as Calvin correctly observes, 'the whole preface has no other tendency than to prove that he was a true prophet of God, and had received the blessing which he uttered from a celestial oracle.'" We are unable to take this view of his preface. To us it "savours very much of pride and vain glory, taking all the praise of this prophecy to himself, and magnifying himself as one of the cabinet-council of heaven. Paul speaks with humility of his visions and revelations (2 Cor. xii. 1); but Balaam speaks of his with pride." (a)

II. The declaration by the prophet of Israel's glory (verses 5-9).

The blessing here pronounced is in its substance very similar to those in the preceding chapter. Balaam declares—

1. *Their beautiful appearance* (vers. 5, 6). Here are three ideas (1) *Beauty*. The beauty of *order*. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (b) And the beauty of *culture and fertility*. "As the valleys are spread forth, as gardens by the river's side." To the mind's eye of the seer, the dwellings of Israel in Canaan spread themselves abroad with the loveliness of fertile valleys, and even as gardens

along the banks of a river, "which are still more lovely than the grassy and flowery valleys" (comp. Deut. viii. 7, 8). (c) (2) *Fragrance*. "As the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted." "The aloe, imported from China and the far distant east, furnished to the ancients one of the most fragrant and precious spices (cf. Psa. xlv. 8), 'All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia' (Prov. vii. 17).'" So the reputation of Israel should be fragrant. Their character and condition should produce a delightful impression upon their neighbours. (3) *Majesty*. "As cedar trees beside the waters." "The noblest of trees branching forth in the fairest of situations; an image of majestic beauty." The beauty of Israel is set forth in a somewhat similar manner in Hos. xiv. 5, 7. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold." The truly godly man is beautiful in his principles and spirit, in his character and conduct. "The beauty of the Lord our God is upon" him.

2. *Their prosperous condition*. Two aspects of prosperity are probably presented by the prophet:—(1) A fertile soil. "He shall pour the water out of his buckets" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). (2) A numerous posterity. "His seed shall be in many waters." Abundant and unfailing prosperity and increase are thus proclaimed as the portion of Israel. And very remarkable was their prosperity at all times when they were faithful to the Lord; and their increase was wonderful.

3. *Their exalted position*. "And his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). The glories of the kingdom of Israel were to far exceed those of their heathen neighbours. We may perhaps find the fulfilment of this prediction in the prosperity and power of the kingdom during the latter part of the reign of David and the greater part of that of his successor. But its most

splendid fulfilment is to be looked for in the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah.

4. *Their conquering power.* This is exhibited in several aspects—(1) Their great *strength*. This is seen in what God had done for them. “God leads him forth out of Egypt.” And in their present condition. “He hath as it were the strength of a wild bull.” The people were strong because God was with them as their leader, &c. (see on chap. xxiii. 22). (2) Their great *conquests*. “He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.” The words point to the complete victory of Israel over their enemies, and their enrichment by means of such conquests. (d) (3) Their great *security*. “He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?” “They were to overcome their foes thoroughly, that none of them would venture to rise up against them again.” The prophet’s words present

a striking picture of assured security. Who shall dare to arouse a sleeping lion? During a great part of the reign of David, and during that of Solomon, Israel was thus secure. When His people are faithful to Him, God guarantees their safety. “The work of righteousness shall be peace,” &c. (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18). (e). (4) Their great *influence*, as a blessing to their friends, and as a bane to their enemies. “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” For this cause, let Balak and all their enemies take warning. God makes His people’s cause His own. “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?”

Here is *encouragement* to the people of God and to their friends. Here is *warning* to their enemies.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) From first to last one thing appears uppermost in this history—Balaam’s self; the honour of Balaam as a true prophet—therefore he will not lie; the wealth of Balaam—therefore the Israelites must be sacrificed. Nay more, even in this sublimest vision his egotism breaks out. In the sight of God’s Israel he cries, “Let me die the death of the righteous;” in anticipation of the glories of the Eternal Advent, “I shall behold Him, but not nigh.” He sees the vision of a Kingdom, a Church, a chosen people, a triumph of righteousness. In such anticipations, the nobler prophets broke out into strains in which their own personality was forgotten. Moses, when he thought that God would destroy His people, prays in agony—“Yet now, if I thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book.” Paul speaks in impassioned words—“I have continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.” But Balaam’s chief feeling seems to be, “How will all this advance me? And the magnificence of the prophecy is thus marred by a chord of melancholy and diseased egotism. Not for one moment—even in those moments when uninspired men gladly forget themselves; men who have devoted themselves to a monarchy, or dreamed of a republic in

sublime self-abnegation—can Balaam forget himself in God’s cause.—F. W. Robertson, *M.A.*

(b) A church is not a load of bricks, remember: it is a house builded together. A church is not a bundle of cuttings in the gardener’s hand: it is a vine, of which we are the branches. The true church is an organised whole; and life, true spiritual life, wherever it is paramount in the Church, without rules and rubrics, is quite sure to create order and arrangement. Order without life reminds us of the rows of graves in a cemetery, all numbered and entered in the register: order with life reminds us of the long lines of fruit trees in Italy, festooned with fruitful vines. Sunday-school teachers, bear ye the banner of the folded lamb; sick visitors, follow the ensign of the open hand; preachers, rally to the token of the uplifted brazen serpent; and all of you, according to your sacred calling, gather to the name of Jesus, armed for the war.—C. H. Spurgeon.

(c) One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman’s garden, acres in extent, and there are beds of flowers, the blue and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria, and the geranium, and many others, all in order, and in ranks. Oh, how glorious this is! Those undulating

lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept, all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! a garden! who can tell how sweet this is! So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious Church is Christ's garden. —*Ibid.*

(d) Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so doth the stream of infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die, for they are short-lived, an ephemeral generation. We have seen the Church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology, ethnology, and anatomy, and then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have issued, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the Church to-day are blown to the wind to-morrow; yea, the Church has been enriched by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been

strengthened, and her bulwarks consolidated. —*Ibid.*

(e) As temporal and earthly governments become more secular, restricting their province to the physical well-being and the external relationships of mankind, there will be felt, amongst all who live a life intellectual and spiritual, the deeper need for the existence of a society and communion more truly corresponding to the higher and proper social nature of man than is possible in monarchies or republics, guilds or clubs. There is no danger of the world learning to do without the Church, or of the Church ceasing to exert a mighty influence over the world. The human rules and customs and creeds of the Churches may be modified; but the Church itself must remain: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Sooner shall the flames of love sink into the ashes of oblivion, and the stream of human thought pause in its eternal flow, than the Church of Christ shall cease to engage the warmest affections, to attract and employ the highest intelligence, and to enlist in her service and consecrate with her blessing the noblest energies of man.—*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verse 5.)

We had thought of going to the New Testament for a text, and taking one of Paul's splendid and comprehensive addresses; but we recollected how much more powerful the confessions of an adversary are than the testimony of a friend. Christianity has in every age gained more from the reluctant tributes of homage extorted from the lips of enemies than from the loftiest efforts of its friends. The admissions of infidels in favour of the happiness and security of a religious life, and the regrets of worldly and irreligious men, say more on behalf of the real value of the Gospel to perishing man than all the labours of divines and all the boasted learning of the schools.

Besides, we have another advantage in the text. The testimony of Balaam will weigh more with many men than that of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul. Paul gained great advantage with the philosophers of Athens by quoting their own authorities—"As certain also of your own poets have said." And here we address intelligent and worldly men in

the words of one of their own number—"As one of your own prophets hath said." Balaam was a man of unquestionable genius, whose convictions were in favour of religion, as yours may be; but his heart was against it. He was a lover of this present world; he was quite enchanted with the smiles and flatteries of royalty, and had an open heart and an oily palm to receive the base bribes which the world could bestow. He was quite bent upon rising in the world, determined that nothing should stop him; he had no small opinion of his own pretensions, his genius, his knowledge, his acquaintance with Divine things, of which, as a practised worldling, he knew the full marketable value; and is in fact quite eloquent in portraying his own exalted advantages—"The man whose eyes are open hath said," &c. Then he went as far as ever he could in opposing conscience—the voice of the Angel—the drawn sword—God. He was bent upon the thing from first to last: to curse he came; to curse he was



determined. When God forbade him to curse by his prophecies, he cursed by his counsels; and actually died in arms against the Church of God. Now, this is the man from whom you are to receive a lecture on the advantages of religion. Mark the blessedness of the righteous as it appears to the eye of worldly and irreligious men. In proof of this happiness we appeal—

**I. To the reluctant testimony of the men of this world.** They express—

1. *Their envy of the happiness of the righteous.* “Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel.” He came prepossessed against them; yet broke out in their favour,—“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,” &c. An acknowledgment that they have nothing to compare with the privileges of the people of God. They secretly bend to a religion of more comfortable promise.

2. *The utter futility of all opposition against the righteous.* “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

**II. To the nature of the blessings which religion brings.**

1. *The anxiety it relieves.* Doubt and uncertainty, fear and guilt; the disorder and restlessness of spirit.

2. *The blessings it reveals.* The counsels of Deity laid open; the scheme of redemption unveiled; pardon and peace; certainty of Divine favour; guidance of Divine providence, &c.

3. *The progressive advancement in holiness and devotion.* Moral triumphs over self, the world, and sin. They “shall be higher than Agag.”

4. *The exalted objects of hope it reveals.* “There shall come a Star,” &c.

**III. To the actual experience of good men in every age.** They have proved that religion gilds prosperity—soothes adversity—softens death, &c.

**IV. To the avowed design of Divine dispensations.**

This is to bless men. Acts iii. 25, 26.—*Samuel Thodey.*

## BALAK'S ANGER AND BALAAM'S APOLOGY.

(Verses 10-14.)

### I. The anger of Balak.

“And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together,” &c. See here—

1. *His bitter disappointment.* “Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.” All his efforts and hopes had ended in this. His distinguished embassies and tempting offers to the prophet, his numerous victims and repeated sacrifices to God, his earnest expectations of ultimately having the Israelites cursed, have issued in a triple declaration of their rich and exalted blessedness. Intense and deep was his mortification.

2. *His severe rebuke of Balaam.* “Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour,” &c. What a humiliation for a man of Balaam's genius and gifts and

“proud pretensions,” to be thus addressed! What a reversal of his cherished purposes and desires as to the issue of this enterprise! Yet, surely Balaam deserved this rebuke. He had pitifully humiliated himself long before Balak uttered his scornful and angry rebuke.

3. *His impious reflection against God.* “Lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.” In these words “the irony with which Balak scoffs at Balaam's confidence in Jehovah is unmistakable;” and their profanity is great.

### II. The apology of Balaam.

1. *His vaunted honesty.* “And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me,” &c. This statement was true in the letter, but utterly false in spirit. Balaam's whole line of conduct was calculated to encourage in Balak the belief

that he would probably succeed in cursing Israel. Balaam's boast of his honesty implies a consciousness of his weakness, if not of his failure in that quality. "Brave men do not vaunt their courage, nor honourable men their honesty, nor do the truly noble boast of high birth. All who understand the human heart perceive a secret sense of weakness in these loud boasts of immaculate purity." (a)

2. *The impotence of man when opposed to God.* "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do good or bad of mine own mind." "He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Sennacherib would have destroyed Jerusalem, but the Lord said unto him, "I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou comest." Satan himself in his hostility against the people of God cannot go beyond the permission of God, as we see from Job i. 12; ii. 6. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

3. *The sovereignty of God.* Balak and Balaam could not frustrate His purposes. His supremacy is real and effectual. Quaintly and truly says Trapp, "God lets out the tedder to wicked men for a time, and then calls them back with shame enough to their task; lets them have the ball on the foot till they come almost to the goal, and then defeats them of their great hopes; as he did this sinful couple. Balak had not his will, nor Balaam his wages; God fooled them both, pulling the morsel out of their mouths, that they had well-nigh devoured." "The Lord reigneth."

Before Balaam takes his departure from Balak he declares unto him still further the blessedness of Israel and their relations in the future to neighbouring nations. "And now, behold, I go unto my people; come, I will advertise thee," &c. Some expositors are of opinion that this refers to the diabolical counsel of Balaam spoken of in chap. xxxi. 16; and Rev. ii. 14. We

reject this opinion for three reasons:—

(1) No such counsel is recorded or even further referred to here. (2) The statement of the prophet in this verse is directly opposed to this opinion. He advertises Balak what Israel would do to the Moabites, not what the Moabites should do to Israel. (3) The advertisement he is about to make to Balak points on to the distant future. The events were to take place "in the latter days," or "at the end of the days," an expression which cannot possibly apply to transactions which took place almost immediately afterward.

III. The lessons to be deduced from this part of the history.

1. *That human nature is deeply selfish.* The selfishness of Balaam has been conspicuous throughout; and now that of Balak is clearly revealed. Formerly, when he hoped to gain his ends by means of Balaam's powers, he was lavish in his courtesies and compliments to him; but now he sees that this hope was vain, he utters to him words of scornful and stinging rebuke. (b)

2. *That evil enterprises have painful issues.* This enterprise has brought to Balak loss, bitter disappointment, and sore annoyance; and to Balaam disappointment equally bitter, painful humiliation, and heavy guilt. God frustrates the designs of his enemies. Even when in the beginning evil courses seem pleasant and prosperous, the end thereof will be wretched and perhaps ruinous. "There is a way that seemeth right," &c. (Prov. xiv. 12). (c)

3. *That sin is utterly impolitic.* Balaam brought upon himself the scorn of Balak, guilt of conscience, and the anger of God, for "the wages of unrighteousness," which he failed to obtain. Sin is extreme folly. The sinner is the greatest fool. (d)

4. *That worldliness is utterly incompatible with obedience to God.* Balaam tried to harmonize them, and miserably failed in the attempt. He succeeded in neither his worldly nor his religious aims. He did not obtain "the rewards of divination;" he incurred the righteous anger of the Lord God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We observe here perfect veracity with utter want of truth. Balaam was veracious. He will not deceive Balak. And yet there was utter truthlessness of heart. Balaam will not utter what is not true; but he will blind himself so that he may not see the truth, and so speak a lie, believing it to be the truth. He will only speak the thing he feels; but he is not careful to feel all that is true. He goes to another place, where the whole truth may not force itself upon his mind—to a hill where he shall not see the whole of Israel: from hill to hill for the chance of getting to a place where the truth may disappear. But there stands the stubborn fact—Israel is blessed; and he will look at the fact in every way, to see if he cannot get it into a position where it shall be seen no longer. Ostrich like!

Such a character is not so uncommon as, perhaps, we think. There is many a lucrative business which involves misery and wrong to those who are employed in it. The man would be too benevolent to put the gold in his purse if he knew of the misery. But he takes care not to know. There is many a dishonourable thing done at an election, and the principal takes care not to inquire. Many an oppression is exercised on a tenantry, and the landlord receives his rent, and asks no questions. Or there is some situation which depends upon the holding of certain religious opinions, and the candidate has a suspicion that if he were to examine, he could not conscientiously profess these opinions, and perchance he takes care not to examine.

There are men who would not play false, and yet would wrongly win. There are men who would not lie, and yet who would bribe a poor man to support a cause which he believes in his soul to be false. There are men who would resent at the sword's point the charge of dishonour, who would yet for selfish gratification entice the weak into sin, and damn body and soul in hell. There are men who would be shocked at being called traitors, who in time of war will yet make a fortune by selling arms to their country's foes. There are men respectable and respected, who give liberally, and support religious societies, and go to church, and would not take God's name in vain, who have made wealth, in some trade of opium or spirits, out of the wreck of innumerable human lives. Balaam is one of the accursed spirits now, but he did no more than these are doing.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) Remember with yourself how gloriously Balaam was welcomed and entertained when he came, and lay it to these words now. Is not the case much altered? So ever was it, and ever will it be in this false world. Men have their drifts and ends, when they give grace and countenance to men; they shoot at a mark, which if they may hit by your means, you shall be a white son still, and all shall be well while you serve their purposes. But if

once you fail, and prefer conscience and honesty before their desire, truth before falsehood, and God before the devil; then hands be smitten together, the foot stamps, the brow frowns, the countenance and heart are changed. Great things were intended to us in favour and love, but now all is lost, we must fly to our place, and be packing. And who hath kept us from honour but God? The fault must be laid upon Him. This to many falleth out most unjustly; but here to Balaam it was due, whose heart was tainted with desire of wicked gain, and so lost both God and his gain. An example to worldly minds if God have any portion in them.—*Babington.*

Was there ever a man that was more moral and cultured than Lord Chesterfield? and was there ever a man that was more exquisitely selfish than he? Men whose tendencies incline them to the world, come to see that if they act from motives of economy, it is best for them to go through life with such and such graces and proprieties. They are persuaded that it is the most profitable way to go through life. On that ground they are moral; but that leaves out some of the essential elements of character. It is not conscience that controls them; it is not faith; it is not hope; it is not spiritual purity; it is not aspiration; it is not rectitude in any shape; it is only a refined form of selfishness. A man may be a thoroughly moral man outwardly, and a thoroughly immoral man inwardly.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) It is ill with thee, sinner, because thy joys all hang upon a thread. Let life's thread be cut, and where are thy merriments? Thy dainty music and thy costly cups, the mirth that flashes from thy wanton eye, and the jollity of thy thoughtless soul, where will these be when death, with bony hand, shall come and touch thy heart, and make it cease its beating? It is ill with you, because when these joys are over you have no more to come. You have one bright chapter in the story, but ah! the never-ending chapter, it is woe, woe, woe, from the beginning to the end: the woe of death, and after death the judgment, and after judgment the woe of condemnation, and then that woe that rolleth onward for ever—eternal woe, never coming to a pause, never knowing an alleviation.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles," said he, for his drunkenness made him see double; "I will blow out one;" and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God: so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down for ever.—*Ibid.*



## BALAAM'S FOURTH PARABLE: THE STAR AND THE SCEPTRE OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 15-19.)

The introduction to this prophecy (vers. 15, 16) corresponds with that which the seer used before (vers. 3, 4), and which we have already noticed.

The predictions recorded in verses 17-19 were partially fulfilled in the reign of David (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; Psa. lx. 8). But it is historically certain that they were not fully accomplished in the reign of David or any of his successors. The Star that shall come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel, as Canon Liddon observes, "is something more than an anticipation of the reign of David: it manifestly points to the glory and power of a Higher Royalty." (a)

It appears to us quite certain that the prophecy applies to Christ and His Kingdom. It sets before us—

I. The glory of the Messiah as a King.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Attersoll thus interprets the symbol of the Star: "He is called by this name—First, because He is the fountain of all salvation and comfort; Secondly, to teach that all men by nature walk in darkness, and in the shadow of death; Thirdly, because He will give those that are His, the light of knowledge in this life, and the light of perfect glory in the life to come." We are not sure that the figure warrants all this. But our Lord spake of Himself as "The bright and morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16), and He is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures as the great Light for the moral darkness of the world (Luke i. 78, 79; ii. 32; John i. 4-9; viii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 19). (b)

But the principal idea seems to be the glory of Christ as the Sovereign of His people. He is, as M. Stuart (on Rev. xxii. 16) says, "a King all resplendent and glorious, like to the morning star (comp. 2 Sam. xxi. 17; Isa. xiv. 12; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. xii.

3). It is the splendour and beauty of the morning star which makes it here an object of comparison with the splendour of the King of Zion." His royal glory is not material, but moral. It consists in such things as these—

1. *The benevolence and sublimity of the objects for which He reigns.* He reigns to save and bless men, &c.

2. *The righteousness of His laws.* These are "holy and just and good."

3. *The wisdom of His methods.* He governs not by force or coercion, but by persuasion and inspiration.

4. *The character and privileges of His subjects.* They are upright and holy in character. They have the exalted privileges of sons of God here, and shall have eternal blessedness and glory hereafter. The glory of this King is set forth in language of splendid eloquence and power in Psa. lxxii.

II. The extent of the Messiah's conquests.

1. *He shall vanquish all His enemies.* "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of confusion; . . . . and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." "Edom and Moab are named by Balaam, as they are also by the prophets (cf., e.g., Isa. xi. 14), not for their own sake merely, but as representatives of the heathen nations (*goyeem*, cf. xxiv. 8), who were hostile to the theocracy. As Jacob then figures as a constant type of the Kingdom of Messiah in the prophets, so too do Edom and Moab of the enemies of that Kingdom; and in the threatened ruin of Edom and Moab is indicated the eventual destruction of all that resist the Kingdom of God in its power." But how will the King destroy the rebellious foes of His Kingdom? May we not reply, by transforming them into loyal subjects. An enemy is never so completely and gloriously destroyed as when he is converted into a true friend. But if any will not be vanquished by the kindness of the

King, they will be broken by His power. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron," &c. (Psa. ii. 8-12.) (c)

2. *He shall take to Himself all the possessions of His vanquished enemies.* "And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies." All treasures and possessions shall surely be ultimately surrendered to Christ the King. The possessors of wealth and of power, the sons of science and the sons of song, the gifted and the beautiful, all will lay their treasures at His feet (comp. Psa. lxxii. 10, 11, 15).

III. The prosperity of the Messiah's subjects.

"And Israel shall do valiantly." Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power." The Church of the living God, supported from on high, has bravely repelled the assaults of all its enemies, and has come forth from every conflict, not only victorious, but with increased courage and strength for future battles.

When Christ shall again appear, and every eye shall see Him, how shall we behold Him?—with joy as our Saviour and King?—or, how? (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Upon whom did the seer look when from the summit of Peor he beheld afar a mysterious personage, and gave as His heraldry the sceptre and the star? This can be none other than He who arose splendid in the midst of universal night—a night of ignorance; a night of guilt—as "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel;" this can be none other than He by whose coming the shadows of ceremonial institutions were dispersed, and who gave to the world the "means of grace and the hope of glory;" this can be none other than He whose setting was in blood, but that blood the purifier of a polluted earth, the purchase of such irradiations from the heaven which is above as shall finally deepen into a sky without a cloud, a day without a night; this can be none other than He who has been invested with all power in heaven and earth, who must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet, and whose dominion is to be established upon the wreck of all human sovereignty; and this is He—we know Him, though spoken of in parables, and shadowed by mystic imagery; He came out of Jacob, He rose out of Israel; for "to the Jews as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all, God blessed for ever." And if it were Christ's day upon which Abraham rejoicingly gazed when looking from the summit of Moriah down the long perspective of many generations, it was Christ's day which was beheld by Balaam, when from Peor's top he discerned, amid the mighty darkness of futurity, a single luminary, the harbinger of morning. If it were Christ of whom the dying Jacob foretold when he spoke of the sceptre departing from Judah, that Shiloh might appear; it was Christ that Balaam pronounced when he predicted that out of the very people whose sovereignty was then to be destroyed, should arise a sceptre before which even Moab must bow; and Balaam might or might not be aware who the Being was of whom he said,

"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." But we who live in the dawning of that day for which prophets and righteous men longed—we who see advances already made towards the glorious consummation when Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords" shall reign triumphant over every nation and tribe and tongue,—we know the Personage whose bright emblazonry was shown to the seer on the vast gloom of future time, and we fall before the "one Mediator between God and man" as the "Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel."—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

(b) Are there reasons to be given why a star should be selected when the Saviour is to be figuratively described? We reply at once—that everything which has to do with light may be fitly taken as an image of Christ. There is nothing which so fitly represents the moral condition of the world when Christ appeared on earth, as darkness. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" and since Christ came to diffuse the knowledge of truth—in other words, to scatter this darkness—His office cannot be better represented than when he is exhibited under figures derived from the nature and the agency of light. But yet you may say, why describe Him as a star—a star which shines with comparatively faint lustre, and which does little towards radiating a benighted creation? Why not rather take the sun as His emblem—the sun which "cometh forth in his strength as a bridegroom from his chamber;" before which the shadows of the night immediately flee, and which pours lavishly its glorious radiance over earth, sea, and sky? Certainly it would seem at first sight, as though the sun were a more appropriate emblem of Christ than a star; and accordingly, whilst you may often hear Christians speaking of your Saviour as the "Sun of righteousness," you will hardly ever hear



them speak of Him as the bright and morning star. They have indeed scriptural warrant in calling Him the "Sun of righteousness," seeing that the words occur in the prophecy of Malachi, and evidently are used of the Redeemer. But this is the single passage in which the emblem of the Sun is employed; whilst that of the star is not of unfrequent occurrence. And if you examine attentively the passage in Malachi, you will find cause to think that it refers specially to a yet future time: for the prophet has just been speaking of that day of the Lord which seems in scripture to denote the second advent of Christ; and it is after describing the fearful desolation which that day will bring upon the wicked, that he is commissioned to say for the comfort of the godly—"But unto you that fear My name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." The title—"Sun of righteousness," as thus given to Christ, would appear to mark with how much fuller and more glorious manifestations the Saviour will show Himself upon His return to this earth, than are vouchsafed to us under the present dispensation. He will be a sun to His Church throughout the millennial and heavenly states; but He is only as a star till those states shall come. The night is yet upon us and around us, though that night may be far spent, and the day may be at hand. "We see only through a glass darkly," as we can "know but in part." Still it is no longer the starless night which it was ere the Redeemer brought life and immortality to light by His gospel. A Star—a morning Star has crossed the horizon, and a tempest-tossed world, in danger of everlasting shipwreck, may steer itself by the light of that Star to the haven where it would be, and where there is to be no more night, though no more sun. And thus, if an emblem is to be found which shall at one and the same time portray the Saviour as the source of moral illumination to the world, and yet show that this illumination is that of the dawn, rather than that of the noon-tide, such an emblem must be a star—a morning star, rather than that of the great luminary of the heavens. Christianity, as set up in the world, is but in its twilight; the night is still unbroken over a vast portion of our globe; and even where revelation has been received and rejoiced in, we must rather speak of streaks like those on the eastern sky, whose gold and purple prophecy of morning, rather than those rich full lustres which flood creation when the sun has reached the zenith. On every account, therefore—on account of what He is to the world, and on account of what (as yet, at least) He is not—is our Redeemer aptly figured by the emblem which He applied to Himself—the emblem of our text—the emblem of the bright and morning star.—*Ibid.*

(c) The sign of the Son of Man is yet to be seen in the heavens, where it was beheld by Balaam, from the summit of Peor. I know not what that sign shall be; perhaps again the star—fearful meteor!—like that which

hung over the fated Jerusalem, boding its destruction; perhaps again the sceptre—brilliant constellation!—burning with majesty and betokening the extinction of all meaner royalty; perhaps the Cross as it appeared to the Roman's eye, when he was taught to know the God of battles, and to place Christianity upon the throne of the Cæsars. But whatever the sign, the Being whose emblazonry it exhibits, shall come to deal out a long delayed vengeance on tribes that have refused to walk in His light and submit to His rule. "Associate yourselves, O ye people," saith Isaiah, "and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." Yes! Edom, and Moab, and Seir, and Sheth, literally the foes of Israel in earlier days, and figuratively those enemies of the Church who shall league for its overthrow at the time of the end—against you shall that Mighty One arise, whose type in the person of David trampled down the nations who first bore your names. And, therefore, do we feel that the future was indeed giving up its secrets to Balaam, as he stood upon Peor, with Israel encamped in the valley beneath. We place ourselves at his side. What seeth he? Dim and mystic things are coming up to his view; a lonely yet a splendid star is rising out of Jacob, and from Israel is proceeding a sceptre, but it looks not like that which a mortal king wields. What mean these hieroglyphics? Whose is this strange yet beautiful heraldry? The answer is easy. Yonder star is the image of Christ, the enlightener of the world; and yonder sceptre is His, for the whole world shall do Him homage. Yes, you say, but ere Christ can shine upon the nations and reign gloriously over them, there is to be battle, and tumult, and earthquake, and destruction. Prophecy is express on this, that there will be a great banding of the powers of earth against "the Lord and His Christ," and these powers must be beaten down ere the reign of righteousness can begin. Beholdest thou, O Seer, aught in the distance which seems to tell thee of foes met and overthrown by Him who hath for His sign the sceptre and the star? We pause for our answer, that we may be certified that it is indeed the Christ on whom the seer looks; and we feel that the prediction is complete when the prophet exclaims, "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies."—*Ibid.*

(d) It has been said by some commentators, that the words of our text have reference to his own final doom, as though Balaam was made aware that he should be banished from the presence of the Being whose coming he was commissioned to predict—"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." He shall be compelled to look on the Mediator; every eye shall see Him; but in place of being allowed to approach Him, he shall be amongst those who will be bidden to



depart. Oh! behold Him now by faith as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Then, when He shall come in power and great majesty, you shall behold Him, not at a distance, as a stranger, but nigh to you as a deliverer, an advocate, a friend. The

"Star" shall light up "the valley of the shadow of death;" the "Sceptre" shall be extended to you in token of favour and acceptance; though as with a rod of iron He breaks in pieces the hosts of the wicked.—*Ibid.*

### CHRIST THE STAR SPOKEN OF BY BALAAM.

(Verses 15-17.)

It has pleased God on various occasions to make known His will to persons of a very unworthy character; and to show that His ways and thoughts are not regulated by the vain maxims of human wisdom. He proclaimed to Ahaz the conception of our Emmanuel in the womb of a virgin. To Nebuchadnezzar He revealed the successive destruction of the four great monarchies, and the erection of the Messiah's kingdom on the ruin of them all. Thus, in the passage before us, we are informed that He declared to Balaam not only His purposes respecting Israel and the nations that surrounded them, but the advent of that glorious Person, who, as a star should enlighten, and as a prince should govern, the whole world.

#### I. The introduction to the prophecy.

1. *It seems very strongly to characterize the person who delivered it.* When prophecies have been delivered by pious men, they have either been introduced with a plain declaration, "Thus saith the Lord;" or the prefatory observations have been calculated to exalt and glorify God. But Balaam's prediction is ushered in with a pompous exhibition of his own attainments, intended, as it should seem, to wrest from Balak that respect and honour which he had failed to procure by his preceding prophecies.

2. *It shows us how much knowledge we may possess, while yet we are utterly destitute of converting grace.* The most highly favoured of God's servants, from the beginning of the world, had not delivered a clearer prophecy of Christ than that which was uttered by Balaam on this occasion. Yet where shall we

find a baser character than Balaam's? Having considerable knowledge of the true God, he still continues to use enchantments as a *magician*. He was so *covetous* that he preferred "the wages of unrighteousness" to every consideration, either of duty to God or of love to man (2 Pet. ii. 15, 16). His *hypocrisy* was conspicuous from first to last; for in the midst of all his high professions of regard to the will and word of God, he laboured to the utmost to counteract the designs of God and to reverse His decrees. More *murderous* purposes never were entertained in the heart of man; for it was his most earnest desire to curse all the people of God, and to consign them over to destruction by the sword of their enemies. His last act especially was truly *diabolical*: when he found he could not prevail to destroy their bodies, he taught their enemies how to tempt them and to destroy their souls (Rev. ii. 14). After comparing his character with his professions and attainments in divine knowledge, what shall we say? Let us never value ourselves on any discoveries of divine truth, unless we have suitable affections and a correspondent practice (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3; Matt. vii. 22, 23).

#### II. The prophecy itself.

1. *In its primary sense it must be understood in reference to David.* The immediate intention of Balaam was to inform Balak what the Israelites should "do to his people in the latter days." Accordingly he declares that one, like a star for brightness, should arise from among the Jews at a distant period, to sway the Jewish sceptre, and to destroy

the Kingdoms of Edom and Moab. This was fulfilled in David (2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; Psa. lx. 8; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16).

2. *But there can be no doubt of its ultimately referring to Christ Himself.* He is called in Scripture "the Day-star," "the bright and morning star;" nor did ever any one arise with splendour comparable to His. He too sat upon the throne of His father David, and exercised unlimited dominion. The children of Edom and Moab may be justly considered as representing the enemies of His Church and People. These He subdues and will finally destroy. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." . . . . Him then did Balaam see, as Abraham also had seen four hundred years before; but not, alas! with Abraham's joyful hope.

Improvement.

1. *Should not we then rejoice who have*

*seen this prophecy accomplished? The star is risen, &c.* We have only to yield ourselves up to Jesus, and we shall enjoy all the peace and glory of His Kingdom. Let us improve our privileges: let us pray that this "Day-star may arise in our hearts:" and let this Monarch so captivate our souls, as to lead us to a willing and unreserved obedience.

2. *Should we not be thankful too that we have One engaged to vanquish all our enemies?* This is the work and office of the Lord Jesus; nor will He ever fail in the execution of it. The Promised Land is before us, and in vain shall our enemies conspire against us. "Be strong and very courageous." Let the weakest rejoice in a confident expectation of victory; for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

#### BALAAH'S FINAL PARABLES: NATIONAL REVOLUTIONS.

(Verses 20-24.)

These prophetic parables teach—

I. That national revolutions exhibit the instability of earthly greatness and temporal power.

See this in the destruction of the Amalekites, which was commenced under Saul and completed under Hezekiah (1 Sam. xv. ; xxvii. 8; xxx. 1-19; 1 Chron. iv. 43). The Kenites, too, though for a long time secure, were at length oppressed and carried into captivity by the Assyrians. Assyria and Eber also, descendants of Shem, were conquered by powers from the (to Balaam) unknown western regions. And finally these western powers "shall perish for ever." The greatest and mightiest empires of ancient days have passed away. All earthly things are transient. (a)

II. That national revolutions manifest the principles of Divine retribution.

In the revolutions predicted by Balaam we have clear and striking illus-

trations of the great truth that the *Divine retribution corresponds to human character and conduct.* The Amalekites were a warlike people; and by battles they were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Again, we see that empires obtained by conquest shall be lost by conquest. By force the Assyrian empire had chiefly been formed, and by force it passed away. We have another illustration of this retributive law in the history of the Kenites. They had been kind to Israel (Exod. xviii.); Moses had promised them that they should share in the goodness of God to Israel (chap. x. 32); Balaam here predicts for them long continued safety; and, as a matter of fact, they shared the fortunes of the Israelites until the captivity of the ten tribes. As v. Hofmann observes: "Kain, which had left its inaccessible mountain home in Horeb, enclosed as it was by the desert, to join a people who were only wandering in search of a home,

by that very act really placed its nest upon a still safer rock." They had aided Israel, and, in turn, they were aided by Israel. In the revolutions of history the kindnesses which have been shown to the cause and people of God are remembered and recompensed by Him. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Thus these historical revolutions teach us that, "With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again"; and, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," &c. (b)

III. That national revolutions are ordered by God.

"God doeth this" (ver. 23). "Whoever are the instruments, He is the supreme director." "The Lord bringeth

low, and lifteth up," &c. (1 Sam. ii. 7, 8). "That bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown," &c. (Ezek. xxi. 26, 27). (c)

Learn—

1. *The great duty and interest of nations to seek for and to embody truth and righteousness in their governments, institutions, &c.* Prov. xiv. 34; xxv. 5; xxix. 14; Isa. lx. 12.

2. *The duty and interest of all men to set their "affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* The latter are mutable and transient, the former are immutable and permanent. Truth, holiness, love, are abiding things; seek after these. (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) *Earthly inheritances are but of brief continuance.* The possession of them is limited and uncertain. To every one, they are but at most for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain answered to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal: "If that had been," said he, "I should never have reigned."—*Leighton.*

All earthly things last and endure but for a season; men are mortal, riches are uncertain, favour is vanity, honour is changeable, treasures are transitory, pleasures are unstable, profits are corruptible, friends are fading, and oftentimes turn to be enemies: only the treasures of heaven, the favour of God, the pleasures of eternal glory, the riches of the world to come, are immortal, and never decay.—*Attersoll.*

(b) *God's rewards and God's punishments are all natural.* Distinguish between arbitrary and natural. Death is an arbitrary punishment for forgery: it might be changed for transportation. It is not naturally connected. It depends upon the will of the law-maker. But trembling nerves are the direct and natural results of intemperance. They are in the order of nature the results of wrong-doing. The man reaps what he has sown. Similarly in rewards. If God gave riches in return for humbleness, that would be an arbitrary connection. He did give such a reward to Solomon. But when He gives Life Eternal, meaning by Life Eternal not duration of existence, but heavenly quality of existence, it is all natural. The seed sown in the ground contains in itself the future harvest. The harvest is but the development

of the germ of life in the seed. A holy act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." He that sows much, thereby becomes more conformed to God than he was before—in heart and spirit. That is his reward and harvest. And just as among the apostles, there was one whose spirit, attuned to love, made him emphatically the disciple whom Jesus loved, so shall there be some who, by previous discipline of the Holy Ghost, shall have more of His mind, and understand more of His love, and drink deeper of His joy than others. They that have sowed bountifully.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 89.

(c) *God increaseth the nations and despoyleth them.* He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. We see only the intermediate agents, we are prone to forget that God is the Creator and Controller as well of the moral as of physical volcanoes, and, consequently, are led to imagine, in the day of panic, that sovereignty is engulfed in confusion, and that the garments of battle are the shroud of government. It is thus that the devoutest of us may not unfrequently alarm ourselves into temporary Atheism, and hasten for refuge to the mud-fortresses of mechanical power, when we should fly straight to the pavilion of God. "The Lord reigneth," &c. His throne is established of old; He is from everlasting. Kings are His servants, princes are His menials, the universe in His footstool, and heaven itself but a flash of His benignant eye.



We shall have but a shallow knowledge of history if we study it merely in the faint light reflected by victorious thrones, or by the troubled glare of oft-recurring battles. God is the central fact in all history. Growing nations are but his expanding smile, dwindling empires are but His darkening frown. Nebuchadnezzar was only the menial servant of the Most High when he built the "great Babylon" which he idolized, and all the conquerors of proud Chaldea, from Cyrus to Tamerlane, were the hirelings of the Infinite King. The Ptolemies and the Pharaohs of Egypt held their lease of power from the Most High : and the pompous march of the Cæsars was but as the dance of the ephemera over the summer stream. "He bringeth the princes to nothing," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). Can it be right, or wise, to ignore *His* existence when we open the archives of history? Can he have a true conception of the magnitude and grandeur of the landscape who has examined it only by the feeble glimmer of a wasting

rushlight? Foolish man! Even an atom would not reveal its beauties in such a mocking light; how much less, then, the mountain, wood, and stream of nature's palaces. No, no! The sun must reveal it. And so with history: let the Sun of heaven blaze upon it, and every pinnacle becomes a glorified purpose—every want kindles into sublime significance.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) Oh, that I could pour in upon the young the majesty and sanctity of living for the invisible; that is to say, for honour, and truth, and fidelity! Oh, that I could make you feel how essentially brittle, how friable, how perishable, are all material sources of strength! God is the centre of life, and spiritual realities are the only things that will endure. Stone and iron, and silver and gold, and timber, and cities, and nations, and outward things, are but pictures, painted soon to fade away; while truth and love, and fidelity, and purity, shall last for ever and for ever.—*H. W. Beecher.*

### DEATH, THE CROWN OF LIFE.

(Verse 23.)

"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

Our text may be considered either as a plaint, a sigh, or a song—a dirge winding to a march. There are, in reality, three questions interlinked in this passage. It is a question of studious curiosity. What kind of a race will then inhabit the earth! Men are naturally inquisitive to know who are to be their successors. Why not? They are to be the heirs in turn of our heritage; the tenants who are to move in as we move out; to enjoy our repairs, and to do, in turn, their own repairing, for those who shall follow them.

*Who are they?* The question deepens into a sigh. Here we go! just as we begin to take in the meaning of things about us; scarce sooner found than lost. Death! what is it? It must be a mystery full of meaning. It seems as natural as to be born. Has Heaven hid the happiness of death, that man may dare to live? And what is life? It is not so much one grand event as a conjunction of grand events. All are more or less alive to the activities that surround them. All are more or less

sensitive to the links that unite us to coming time.

The future is full of suggestion. The poet loves to forecast it for its own sake, and fill the atmosphere with sunshine, or with shade, as suits his fancy best. The poet is an artist too. He paints for us the landscape of the future, and interprets to our strange surprise the distant scenes embodied there. The philosopher listens eagerly for hints that shall confirm his airy schemes and idle speculations. The statesman is zealously intent on discovering the wedge that shall cleave the knots of craggy policies. The saint is anxious to learn of God and Heaven, and solve the awful mystery of our being.

But what of that which is to transpire long after all these are past? What will go on here when I am gone? Some one will tread the path that I am treading! Some one will saunter in the grove where I now linger! . . . Some one will cry out with unutterable longing, as *we* now cry, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

We are baffled at the grave. We put our eyes close to the bars, but we

cannot see. Death is the crown of life; and yet it is not the triumph of man over time, but of time over man. . . . Do lasting slumbers hold us? Is there no more of us when we are gone? Oh! the melancholy ring of those words—"When I am gone!" I admit it is a solemn thing to die. It is a dread passage; and what may happen after it? There is an eternity to this side the grave; the world shall be moving on when I am gone—and shall I then be put out for ever? The emphasis is on this wise—this world *as it is to be*. Where are those who, in the times past, have been dreaming of rapid propulsion as they plodded slowly on? Where are those whose genius had almost wrested from nature the longed-for secret, but died without the sight? Know they now of swift-going ships and dashing railway trains that traverse mountain and valley like things of life? Where are those who dreamed of messages borne on the wings of the wind? Do they read the swift-flying signals from telegraph wires, leaving the winds lagging languidly behind? Verily, what hath God wrought! Yet these are but the meagre preliminaries to what *shall be*. When the reduplicated forces of the earth shall be put under command; when man shall sit in plumed victory over the opposing energies of nature; when the sword shall be beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; when health shall mantle the cheek, and happiness shall festoon the fireside; when man shall keep faith with his fellow-man, and worship and adore his Maker. "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" Shall I live then? The thought gladdens, but it maddens as well. The scepticism that would console me with the thought that death is but a momentary pang; that I shall sleep in death's dateless night; that all these struggles shall have come to their rest; ah! this scepticism is but a miserable comforter after all. I cry out and complain with all the sadness of my rational nature. I am full of longing to know when this world shall have

been finished; then, where shall I be?

When geology shall cease to tamper with the rock; when disease shall be no longer necessary; when Death shall lie on his death-bed; "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" The Great Omnipotent does not weary. Every age becomes impatient; but His doings, as well as His revelation, assure us that with Him "a thousand years are as one day." . . . When we have fought our brave round, the Great Captain will order us to the rear and bring up fresh recruits. But what of the battle? Shall we know nothing of its sequel? "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" It is a question of sublime importance to us.

It is voiced in another shape—"If a man die, shall he live again?" God has provided a way by which His people may be released, and yet view this earth in all its perfect beauty and glory. The resurrection solves this mighty problem. All who labour shall see the reward of their labour. Every husbandman whose time is due to toil shall be gladdened by the sight of the harvest. The sower shall be partaker of the fruit. "I heard a voice from heaven," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13). God works in the shadow of time. Even while we sleep he toils on; His agencies are ever on the alert.

Presently time shall have halted from its confused scramble, and God's finished workmanship shall have been taken from the loom, and the tapestry shall be revealed in all its beauty and perfectibility—the pattern will be complete. Then shall we learn that when we die we do not die out; that death is not death; that to die is not to die, but to blossom into life. We say good night to earth, but not good-bye. And all this we shall know when sin has perished; when death is dead; when tears are dried; when earth is immortal—we may then be alive, and never die again. Blessed reality close at hand! Shall we, *every one*, live when God doeth this?—*H. S. Carpenter, D.D.* (Abridged from *The Christian World Pulpit*.)

## THE PARTING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verse 25.)

Instead of "Balaam returned to his place," it is better to translate, "turned towards his place." "That he really returned home is not implied in the words themselves; and the question, whether he did so, must be determined from other circumstances. In the further course of the history, we learn that Balaam went to the Midianites, and advised them to seduce the Israelites to unfaithfulness to Jehovah, by tempting them to join in the worship of Peor (chap. xxxi. 16). He was still with them at the time when the Israelites engaged in the war of vengeance against that people, and was slain by the Israelites along with the five princes of Midian (chap. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22). At the time when he fell into the hands of the Israelites, he no doubt made a full communication to the Israelitish general, or to Phinehas, who accompanied the army as priest, concerning his blessings and prophecies, probably in the hope of saving his life, though he failed to accomplish his end." Such is the opinion of Keil and Del. Hengstenberg, however, suggests "that after Balaam's departure from Balak, he took his way into the camp of the Israelites, and there made known his prophecies to Moses, or to the elders of Israel, in the hope of obtaining from them the reward which Balak had withheld, and that it was not till after his failure to obtain full satisfaction to his ambition and covetousness here that he went to the Midianites, to avenge himself upon the Israelites, by the proposals that he made to them."

I. Balaam and Balak parted, having utterly failed in their designs.

Balak had not obtained what he desired. His repeated sacrifices to Jehovah, his tempting offers of large rewards and splendid honours to Balaam, and all his other efforts, had proved fruitless and vain: Israel was not cursed but repeatedly and richly

blessed. Balaam, too, had not obtained what he so eagerly longed for. He had found himself utterly unable to curse the chosen people, and had not gained "the rewards of divination." The coveted wealth and honours, for which he had risked and dared so much, he had not secured. The prophet and the king were both bitterly disappointed and vexed; and during all their plottings and endeavours to curse them, the Israelites were peacefully and securely encamped in the neighbouring plains.

Learn: *the devices and deeds of the wicked against the cause and people of God are ever foiled by Him.* He that keepeth Israel can neither be surprised, nor circumvented, nor overpowered (Psa. cxxxi.). (a)

II. They parted with characters considerably modified by their association with each other.

The solicitations and temptations of Balak had influenced the character of Balaam; and the character and conduct of Balaam had exercised no slight influence upon Balak. What was the result of these influences? We know that the character of Balaam had sadly deteriorated since the first embassy from Balak had visited him; he had also incurred the wrath of God by reason of his sins; and he went forward to deeper and more diabolical wickedness, and to a doom of appalling darkness. And it is impossible to conclude that Balak was not injured by the influence of Balaam. His heinous designs had been encouraged, his hopes allowed and then blighted, and his temper irritated and embittered by the seer. They had mutually influenced each other for evil; they parted worse men than they were when first they met.

Learn: *that in our associations with our fellowmen we are ever exerting a most important influence upon their character and destiny.* We meet and part; but in our intercourse we have contributed



something to the development of each other's character either for good or for evil. We shall never be the same beings as we should have been if we had never met. (b)

### III. They parted, but not for ever.

Balaam and Balak will meet again. They will both see Him of whom Balaam prophesied, "They shall see Him, but not now; they shall behold Him, but not nigh." "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." Then, if not before, these two who

parted upon Peor will meet again; and then each of them will receive the just retribution of his character and conduct.

*Learn.*—That *those who have been associated in this present life will meet again in the great hereafter.* Tempter and tempted, oppressor and oppressed, companions in evil designs and deeds, and companions in noble aims and enterprises, all will meet again.

Let the thought of that future meeting have its due weight in regulating our present associations. (c)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Sooner would God forget some planets that He had hurled into the firmament than forget the feeblest of His saints. "Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me." "The very hairs of your head are numbered." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." God has pledged His power on our behalf. He has sworn by His existence that we are dear to Him through the infinite merits of His Son. Who shall tell the limits of our security? If God keeps all worlds in motion—if the eyes of the universe are directed to Him for help—if all things are under His benignant control, we may content ourselves in the plenitude of our safety. Say not, brother, that thy solitude is hidden from God, or that in the time of affliction He will forget thee; perish the thought! The mother may forget her sucking child; but God will hold thee in everlasting remembrance; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in His people" (Psa. cxlix. 4). God looks at the individual, not at the aggregate. The Christian cannot be lost in the world's crowd. The Koh-i-noor may be taken for a piece of valueless glass, but the Christian gem cannot be mistaken of God. They who love God shall be accounted jewels in "that day." Each is a part of the whole, and unity must be perfected in heaven.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) No human being can come into this world without increasing or diminishing the sum total of human happiness, not only of the present, but of every subsequent age of humanity. No one can detach himself from this connection. There is no sequestered spot in the universe, no dark niche along the disk of non-existence, to which he can retreat from his relations to others, where he can withdraw the influence of his existence upon the moral destiny of the world. Everywhere his presence or absence will be felt. Everywhere he will have companions, who will be better or worse for his influence.

It is an old saying, and one of fearful and fathomless import, that we are here forming

characters for eternity. Forming characters!—whose? our own? or others? Both; and in that momentous fact lie the peril and responsibility of our existence. Who is sufficient for the thought! thousands of my fellow-beings will yearly, and till years shall end, enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had I never lived. The sunlight of that world will reveal my finger-marks in their *primary formations*, and in all their successive strata of thought and life. And they too will form other characters for eternity, until the influence of my existence shall be diffused through all the future generations of this world, and through all that shall be future to a certain point in the world to come. As the little silvery, circular ripple, set in motion by the falling pebble, expands from its inch of radius to the whole compass of the pool; so there is not a child, not an infant Moses placed, however softly, in his bulrush ark upon the sea of time, whose existence does not stir a ripple, gyrating outwards and on, until it shall have moved across and spanned the whole ocean of God's eternity, stirring even the river of life, and the fountains at which His tall angels drink.—*Elihu Burritt.*

(c) It is said that among the high Alps at certain seasons the traveller is told to proceed very quietly, for on the steep slopes overhead the snow hangs so evenly balanced that the sound of a voice or the report of a gun may destroy the equilibrium, and bring down an immense avalanche, that will overwhelm everything in ruin in its downward course. And so about our way there may be a soul in the very crisis of its moral history, trembling between life and death, and a mere touch or shadow may determine its destiny. A young lady who was deeply impressed with the truth, and was ready, under a conviction of sin, to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" had all her solemn impressions dissipated by the unseemly jesting and laughter of a member of the Church by her side as she passed out of the sanctuary. Her irreverent and

worldly spirit cast a shadow on that young lady "not far from the kingdom of God." How important that we should always and everywhere walk worthy of our high calling as Christians! Let us remember that we are always casting the shadow of our real life upon some one; that somebody is following us as John followed Peter into the sepulchre.

Happy if, when all the influences of life flow back and meet at the judgment, we can lift up clean hands and spotless robes, and say, "I am free from the blood of all men!" Happy then, to hear even one soul saying to us out of the great multitude, that, following the shadow of our Christian life and devotion, he found Jesus and heaven.—*Dr. Storr.*

## CHAPTER XXV.

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Shittim*. An abbreviation of Abel-Shittim, "the meadow of the acacias." It was situated in the plains of Moab, at the northern extremity of the camp of Israel.

Verse 2. *And they called, &c.*; "i.e., 'the daughters of Moab called': the verb, and the ensuing 'their,' being in Hebrew, feminine."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. *Baal-Peor* is the Baal of Peor, who was worshipped in the city of Beth-Peor (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46; chap. xxiii. 28), a Moabitish *Priapus*, in honour of whom women and virgins prostituted themselves. As the god of war, he was called *Chemosh* (chap. xxi. 29). *Keil* and *Del.*

Verse 4. *Take all the heads, &c., i.e.,* Assemble them together.

*Hang them.* The "them" does not refer to "the heads of the people," but to the guilty persons: these were to be first put to death (verse 5), and then, as an aggravation of their punishment, and as a warning to others, they were to be publicly hung up, which was done by impaling the body upon a stake or fastening it upon a cross.

*The fierce anger of the Lord* was manifested in the plague with which he visited the camp of Israel (verse 9).

Verse 6. *One of the children of Israel, &c.* This was Zimri (verse 14).

*A Midianitish woman,*—"Cozbi, the daughter of Zur" (verse 15, and chap. xxxi. 8).

*Weeping, &c.* On account of the

wrath of God which had smitten the camp with the plague.

Verse 8. *The tent,* תֹּכֵחַ, not the ordinary tent. The word is only found here in the Hebrew Scriptures; it signifies arched or dome-shaped. From the Hebrew word, through the Arabic, the Spaniards derive their *alcova*, and we our *alcove*. Here the word denotes, the inner division of the tent, which was used as the sleeping room and apartment for the women in the larger tents of the upper classes.

Verse 9. *Twenty and four thousand.* In 1 Cor. x. 8, St. Paul gives the number as "three and twenty thousand." In this he probably follows a tradition of the scribes, according to which, of the twenty-four thousand mentioned here, one thousand were put to death by the judges, leaving twenty-three thousand as the number of those who fell victims to the plague.

Verse 11. *Zealous for My sake.* Rather, as in the margin, "Zealous with My zeal."

Verse 13. *Made an atonement.* The vengeance inflicted by Phinehas upon two of the most flagrant offenders was accepted by God as a propitiation (lit., a covering) for the sin of the people.

Verse 17. *Vex the Midianites.* The Midianitish women seem to have been most active in tempting the Israelites. Moreover their wickedness "culminated in the shameless wantonness of Cozbi, the Midianitish princess."

## THE SIN OF ISRAEL AT SHITTIM, AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

(Verses 1-5, 9.)

Consider—

## I. The sin of the Israelites at Shittim.

“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people,” &c. (vers. 1-3).

1. *The sin itself.* Many of the people accepted the invitation of the daughters of Moab and Midian to a sacrificial festival, and then engaged in the worship of Baal-peor, which was associated with, and partly consisted in, the most licentious rites. Their sin was two-fold : (1) Spiritual fornication, or idolatry (Hos. ii.). (2) Physical fornication.

2. *The origin of their sin.* The counsel of Balaam was the accursed root from whence it sprang (chap. xxxi. 16 ; Rev. ii. 14). Having found himself utterly powerless to curse them as a prophet or a magician, with hellish cunning he advised that others should seduce them to curse themselves by their sins. (a)

3. *The instruments of their sin.* The daughters of Moab (ver. 2), and the daughters of Midian (vers. 17, 18), were employed to tempt the Israelites. The Moabites and Midianites could not have vanquished the Israelites by the sword, but they speedily overcame them by the fascinations of their daughters.

4. *The occasion of their sin.* Two circumstances seem to us to have contributed to the success of the temptation. (1) Their abode at Shittim. They were in the neighbourhood of sinful associations and corrupting influences. “Near a fire, a serpent, and a wicked woman, no man can long be in safety.” (b) (2) Their lack of occupation. The Israelites were comparatively unemployed. Idleness leads to vice and mischief. (c)

## II. The judgment of God upon the Israelites on account of their sin.

1. *The judgment inflicted immediately by God.* “Those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.” “They joined themselves unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with

their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them” (Psa. cvi. 28, 29). As a punishment for their sin, the Lord sent among them this terrible pestilence. In some form or other, punishment ever follows close upon the heels of sin.

2. *The judgment inflicted by Moses and the judges, by the command of God.* “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people,” &c. (vers. 4, 5). Concerning this punishment notice—(1) Its nature—death. “Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-Peor.” (2) Its publicity. “Hang them up before the Lord against the sun.” After death their bodies were to be made a public spectacle—a warning to others by indicating the evil of the sin and the severity of the wrath of God against the sinners. (3) Its executioners. These are called “the heads of the people” (ver. 4), and “the judges of Israel” (ver. 5, and Exod. xviii. 25, 26). It was their duty to maintain law and order, and to punish wicked doers, each one in his own jurisdiction (comp. Rom. xiii. 1-4).

III. The lessons which we should learn from this portion of Israel's history.

1. *The secret of the security of the people of God.* While Israel was faithful to Jehovah their God, they were perfectly safe. Neither the subtlety nor the strength of their enemies, neither earth nor hell, could hurt them, while they were true to their covenant with Him. “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.” Their sins deprived them of the Divine protection, and brought down upon them the Divine anger. “None can prevail against the servants of God, except by tempting them to sin.” “By our own sins we are overcome.” Faith in God is the great condition of our strength and safety. Cleaving to Him by faith, we are inviolably secure.



2. *The danger of those temptations which appeal to our self-indulgence or love of pleasure.* In most cases ease and pleasure are more perilous to the spiritual life than toil and pain. The pleasures of sense are very prone to grow into the pleasures of sin. Many have been "allured through the lusts of the flesh" into the most grievous sins. (d)

3. *The terribleness of the Divine anger.* Calm, righteous, constant, and intense is the wrath of God against sin. Let no one deceive himself or dishonour God by imagining that, like some weak-natured man, He is too kind and indulgent to His creatures to be angry

with them. With implacable hatred He hates sin. "The wrath of the Lamb" is unspeakably, inconceivably, terrible. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with his stroke," &c. (e)

4. *The solicitude with which we should guard against arousing this anger towards us.* Sin calls it forth, therefore shun sin.

5. *The earnestness with which we should seek the mercy and the protection of God.* We need His mercy for the forgiveness of sins in the past, and His protection to keep us from sin in the future. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Among the people who knew and disapproved the events which befell the Israelites since their migration from Egypt, it must have been notorious that there had been signal punishments inflicted upon them for breaches of fealty to their King. Pondering this in his mind, the infernal sagacity of Balaam led him to conclude, that if they could but be seduced from their allegiance to their Divine King, the protection which rendered them invincible would be withdrawn, and they would be easily subdued by their enemies. This discovery he made known to the King of Moab before his departure, and it illustrates the character of the man, that he could form this device, and counsel the King to act upon it, just after his mouth had poured forth, even by constraint, eloquent blessings upon the people whose ruin he now devises. And all this was purely gratuitous; for his business with Moab was ended. He could not curse Israel; and he had incurred the anger, rather than secured the honours, of the King of Moab. He seems to have retired among the neighbouring people of Midian, close allies with Moab, until he should behold the results of the course which he had thus suggested, and in which he seems to have induced the Midianites to co-operate. However dissatisfied with the result of their sending for him, the Moabites were still too deeply impressed with the notion of his superhuman sagacity not to pay the most heedful attention to his advice. This was in effect that the women should be rendered instrumental in seducing the Israelites to take part in the obscene rites of Baal-Peor.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) As the Hebrews lay encamped in the plains of Moab, unsuspecting of the bad feeling of the Moabites and Midianites towards them, an intercourse gradually, and seemingly in due course, sprang up between the kindred

nations. The daughters of Moab and Midian came to visit the women of Israel, and thus fell under the notice of the men. The men of Israel, also, new to a peopled country, and strange to a friendly intercourse with strangers, amused themselves and gratified their curiosity by visiting the towns and villages in the vicinity. This intercourse was perilous for them. Dazzled and bewildered by magnificent and seductive appliances of vice, to which in their simple wandering life they had been all unused, although their fathers had seen the like things in Egypt, they were prevailed upon by the idolaters of Moab and Midian to take part in the riotous and lustful orgies of their gods. It does not appear to us that they meant to abjure their faith in Jehovah, or so much as adopted a belief in Baal-Peor along with it. What they did was to participate in the licentious acts by which his votaries professed to honour him.—*Ibid.*

Albeit we cannot at all times forsake the familiarity of the unfaithful, yet we must ever abandon and abjure their unfaithfulness and ungodliness: we cannot ever refuse their company, but we must evermore renounce their impiety. Let us take heed that we embrace none of their sins. He that standeth farthest from a raging flame, is freest and farthest off from burning; he that walketh a great distance from the bank of the river, is safest from drowning. He that cometh not near places of infection, is surest to escape the danger. And as we are to beware of all their sins, so especially it behoveth us to be suspicious and fearful of those sins, unto which we know ourselves most prone and inclined. For they do most of all delight us, and those are they which will soonest overturn us, and bring upon us destruction of soul and body.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) And was idleness think you nothing?

Yes, yes, assure yourself, it is ever a chief agent in this business. Had our first mother been busy, she had not tattled with the serpent; and had they not been idle in Sodom, they had never fallen to that abomination; for idleness is mentioned as a means by the prophet (Ezek. xvi. 49). Take idleness away, and Cupid's bow casts the string: he will never do harm with all his arrows. Dost thou ask the question, how *Agistis* became an adulterer? He was idle. David was idle on the top of the palace; and what followed? These Israelites are idle, and idle they tattle, and tattling they are invited to their sacrifice, invited, they go, and both spiritually and corporally they commit whoredom. A fearful fall in men so taught. But this is man's weakness and woman's strength.—*Babington*.

(d) Pleasures are of two sorts: some are simply unlawful, and not to be used at all, being directly contrary to the Word of God: such are the pleasures that carnal men take in eating till they surfeit, and in drinking till they are drunken; such are the pleasures that whoremongers take in adultery, fornication, and uncleanness. Others are of themselves indifferent, and in their own nature neither good nor evil, but according as they are used, as hunting, hawking, and other lawful recreations; and even these when they take up all our thoughts, and thrust better things out of

the doors, are called thorns in the parable of the sower, as well as unlawful pleasures (Luke viii. 14). There is nothing doth so much choke the Word of God as the pleasures of the flesh; nothing causeth us so soon to forget it; nothing maketh us so soon weary and loath to hear it, as the desire to follow and pursue after our delights; so that it standeth us upon to cut them up, and pull them out of the ground of our hearts. . . . We see many by experience, who in the days of tribulation have not given over their hold, but endured slanders, revilings, imprisonment, hunger, and thirst in a necessitous estate; yet have been overcome with peace, drowned with sensuality, and lulled asleep in carnal security. . . . Whilst David wandered in the wilderness, was hunted out of holes by Saul, into which he was glad to escape to hide himself, and was trained up in the school of afflictions, he comforted himself in the Lord his God, he made Him his rock and refuge, he asked counsel of Him and followed His direction; but when he had rest from enemies, safety from dangers, deliverance from troubles, comfort from sorrows, and freedom from afflictions, he fell into horrible sins, both in the matter of Uriah, and in numbering of the people.—*Attersoll*.

(e) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 220, 221.

## THE FLAGRANT WICKEDNESS OF ZIMRI, AND THE FERVENT ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verses 6-15.)

Notice—

### I. The flagrant wickedness of Zimri.

"And, behold, one of the children of Israel came," &c. (ver. 6).

1. *The heinousness of his sin.* Fornication in any one is a great and grievous sin, but in one of the chosen people its enormity is far greater than in others. They had a clearer revelation of God's will; they enjoyed superior privileges; they were called to a higher and purer moral life than their heathen neighbours; hence fornication in them was far more heinous than in their neighbours (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 15-20).

2. *The aggravations of his sin.* His guilt was aggravated by—(1) The position which he occupied. "The name of the Israelite that was slain with the Midianitish woman was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites." It was

incumbent upon him to set an example of order and purity and loyalty to Jehovah. His partner in guilt, too, was a princess. Her name was "Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian" (comp. chap. xxxi. 8). (2) The effrontery with which he sinned. Not content with sinning amongst the Midianites, he brought the woman into the camp of Israel, which Jehovah had commanded to be kept pure (chap. v. 1-3). And this he did "in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel." An utter absence of shame marked his vile conduct; he seems rather to parade than to hide his wickedness. (3) The daring and defiant character of his sin. The wrath of God had gone forth and was smiting the people with the deadly pestilence: by his conduct he bids it defiance. The

judges had been commanded to put to death the sinners: by his action he dares them to deal with him. He sinned presumptuously—"with a high hand" (comp. chap. xv. 30, 31). (a)

3. *The infamy of the sinners.* "Now the name of the Israelite that was slain," &c. (vers. 14, 15). Thus the names, the families, and the rank of the evil-doers are perpetuated. An immortality of infamy is theirs.

## II. The fervent zeal of Phinehas.

"And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 7, 8).

1. *Its character.* "He was zealous with My zeal" (ver. 11); "he was zealous for his God" (ver. 13). "He abhorred the presumptuous wickedness of Zimri, as God abhorred it." He was filled with holy indignation against one who so flagrantly sinned and so greatly dishonoured God. His holy zeal burned to arrest the progress of the sin, and to vindicate the honour of Jehovah. (b)

2. *Its expression.* On seeing the conduct of Zimri, he promptly seized aspear, and following the guilty pair into the inner apartment of the tent, he "thrust both of them through." The authority of Phinehas to execute summary vengeance on Zimri and Cozbi has been challenged. The case presents itself to us thus: the outrageous sin of Zimri imperatively demanded stern and immediate punishment; and the nature of that punishment was already declared (ver. 5). But they who should have inflicted it seem to have been sorrow-stricken, and made no attempt to deal with the offenders. Tears of grief and shame were natural; but surely at such a time stern and decisive action was the great need. The indulgence of sorrow should have been firmly repressed until the judgment of God had been executed. With rare discernment Phinehas perceived the treatment which should be dealt out to those atrocious sinners, and with zeal and courage equally rare he at once applied that treatment. The case was of exceptional flagrancy and enormity, and demanded exceptional treatment,

and Phinehas administered that treatment. The "deed was its own justification. Its merit consisted in the evidence it gave that his heart was right before God. He risked his own life by dealing according to their deserts with two influential and defiant evil-doers."

(c) If his conduct needed apology we may well give it in the words of Bishop Hall: "God pardoneth the errors of our fervency, rather than the indifferences of our lukewarmness." Moreover this act of Phinehas cannot without extreme unfairness be said to afford any countenance to "acts of private revenge, of religious persecution, or even of irregular public vengeance." (d)

3. *Its effect.* "So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. . . . Phinehas hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel; . . . and made an atonement for the children of Israel." The act of Phinehas was accepted by God as a national "atonement," "covering," or "propitiation." By this act he publicly manifested—(1) a right estimate of the sin; (2) right feelings in relation to it; (3) right action in relation to it—he endeavoured to make an end of it. It appears to us probable that it was because of these qualities in the action of Phinehas that God accepted it as "an atonement for the children of Israel." The due administration of justice by magistrates and judges tends to prevent the judgments of God. If they are lax in dealing with vice and crime, God will sternly deal with them Himself.

4. *Its reward.* For this zealous action Phinehas was—(1) Divinely commended. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 10, 11, and Psa. cvi. 30, 31). (2) Divinely rewarded. "Behold, I give unto Him My covenant of peace," &c. (vers. 12, 13). The covenant bestowed upon Phinehas was the confirmation to him and his posterity after him of the possession of the priesthood. "In accordance with this promise, the high-priesthood which passed from Eleazar to Phinehas (Judges xx. 28) continued in his family, with the



exception of a brief interruption in Eli's days, until the time of the last gradual dissolution of the Jewish state through the tyranny of Herod and his successors." Thus for his zealous action Phinehas was himself rewarded, and his posterity was blessed for his sake.

"Brave works for God win crowns.

There is no merit in them. But the grace, which gives the will, and nerves the arm, and brings success, awards a recompense. Among earth's happiest sons and heaven's most shining saints, devoted labourers hold foremost place."

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 280, 281.

(b) Zeal may be defined as the heat or fervour of the mind, by which its vehemence of indignation goes out against anything which it conceives to be evil, and its vehemence of desire towards anything which it conceives to be good. In itself it has no moral character at all. It is the simple instinct of energetic nature, never wholly divested of a sort of rude nobility, and never destitute of influence upon the lives and upon the characters of others.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

"He that is not zealous, doth not love." Now right zeal acts, like fire, to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing Truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up; and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief; to see Truth trodden under the feet of error and profaneness, and he not able to help it up.—*W. Gurnall.*

(c) I think I could give my own life, if called to do so, for the cause of Christ and the welfare of men. Why, then, should I hesitate to denounce anything that is opposed to the cause of Christ? Why should I hesitate to inveigh against anything, however sacred it may be to others, which is injurious to the welfare of men? I will not fear to condemn any organisation, or any institution, that seems to me to stand in the way of God's glory or man's redemption. It is not personal bit-

terness that leads me to use severity. It is for men, and not against men, that I am inflamed and aroused. And my indignation is strong just in proportion as those for whom it is called out are weak and unable to defend themselves.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Zeal is indeed a wonder-working grace. It scales the heavens in agonizing prayer. It wrestles with Omnipotence, and takes not denial. Who can conceive what countries, districts, cities, families, and men have sprung to life, because Zeal prayed! It also lives in energetic toil. It is the moving spring in hearts of apostles, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and burning preachers of the Word. What hindrances it overleaps. What chains it breaks! What land it traverses! It girdles earth with efforts for the truth: and pyramids of saved souls are trophies to its praise.—*H. Law, D.D.*

(e) I know that the most of you are diligent in business. You never hear the ring of a guinea without being on the alert to earn it if possible. Your coats are off, and very likely your shirt sleeves are turned up when there is a chance of driving trade. That I commend; but oh! do let us have something like it in the service of Jesus Christ. Do not let us be drudging in the world, and drawling in the church; lively in the service of mammon, and then laggard in the service of Christ. Heart and soul, manliness, vigour, vehemence—let the utmost strain of all our powers be put forth in the service of Him who was never supine or dilatory in the service of our souls when they had to be redeemed.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

### ZEAL.

#### (Outline of an Address.)

#### (Verses 11-13.)

We can lay no claim to saintship without zeal. When wickedness grows defiant, as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, then zeal, as in the example of Phinehas, must be bold and daring.

#### I. The source of godly zeal.

It is from the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost. It draws its vital force from the constant operations of the Spirit in the soul. Zeal is holy fire kindled in the heart. Coldness is barrenness, and ends in death. Jeremiah said: "I will speak no more in His name." But silence was impossible. He exclaims:

"But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Grace in the heart must break forth. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

**II. Godly zeal has its seat in the heart.**

When David penned that beautiful Psalm relating to the majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom, he began by saying: "My heart is inditing a good matter." The ideas of fullness and fervour are both expressed. My heart is hot as if it had holy fire within. Zeal is not a mere thing of the brain or of intellectual power, but a reality from a sanctified heart. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes us like John, who was a burning and shining light.

**III. Mark the object of holy zeal.**

We are to be "zealous of good works." Men are often deceived in this matter. There is a great deal of party spirit, and deadly persecution, which often goes under the name of Christian zeal. Zeal is a mixed passion of grief and anger, fervent love and holy desire, all fused together in one holy emotion of the soul, spending itself for the glory of Christ. It is the fervour of heavenly benevolence. It thirsts for Divine knowledge, seeks for fellowship with Christ, and labours with self-denial for His sake. Zeal travails in birth for

the salvation of souls; is ready for every good work; creates opportunities of usefulness.

**IV. True zeal is blended with knowledge.**

Zeal without knowledge is like a blind man running on a narrow plank. This was the case with John (Luke ix. 54-56). The zeal of Paul was wrong before his conversion. The Jews had zeal without knowledge when they rejected the righteousness of Christ in order to establish their own. Moses was rash when he broke the two tables on which the Law was written, because Israel had broken one. Minerva put a golden bridle upon Pegasus that he should not fly too fast. Blind zeal, as well as an offering without an eye, will both be rejected by God. To enlighten others we must have light ourselves.

**V. Zeal is forgetful of itself.**

Self-denial is an element of true greatness. Every grace must be strong for Jesus "and do exploits," but this must be so especially with zeal. Paul in his perils, and Barnabas in the sale of his land, Bunyan in prison, and martyrs at the stake, Carey in India, Pierce in the pulpit, and Fuller in his travels for missions, are all worthy of imitation. Each of these men manifested forgetfulness of self. What more shall we say? "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos vi. 1).—*The Study.*

#### THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MOVED THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verse 13.)

"He was zealous for his God."

**I. There was the enormity of their sin.**

It included false doctrine and sinful practices, between which there is a closer connection than is always recognised.

**II. There was the character of the instigator to the sin.**

Balaam, "a strange mixture of a man," whose character has been ably analyzed by Butler, Pye Smith, Arnold, and many others.

**III. There was the extent to which the sin prevailed.**

Among all classes. Logan on the Social Evil.

**IV. There was the misery occasioned by the sin.**

To the guilty, to their connections, to the community.

**V. There was the dishonour done to God.**

1. We should be zealous in religion.

2. Our zeal in contending against the sins of others should begin in zeal in contending against our own.—*George Brooks.*

## THE PUNISHMENT OF THE TEMPTERS.

(Verses 16-18.)

The Lord here commands Moses to avenge the wrongs which the Midianites had done to the Israelites. It is not private revenge which is here enjoined, but the avenging of a great injury inflicted by one people upon another. The carrying out of this command is given in chap. xxxi. In that place the subject will be more fully considered: at present it will be sufficient to notice the following observations, which the text suggests:—

**I. Sin, whether in the people of God or in His enemies, cannot go unpunished.**

The Israelites, who had been seduced into sin, had been severely punished by God. And now, as was surely just, the Midianites who had been most active in seducing them, are to be punished also. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites," &c. Tempter and tempted, both had sinned, and both must be punished for their sin. When the child is punished for his sins, the stranger who has also sinned cannot hope to escape. "Judgment must begin at the house of God," &c. (1 Pet. iv. 17). (a)

1. *Here is warning to those who tempt others to sin.* (b)

2. *Here is warning also to those who yield to temptation.* Tempters and temptations, howsoever seductive, can-

not compel you to sin. If you yield to them, you will surely suffer loss, or chastisement, or judgment. (c) (1) Avoid scenes of temptation and the society of tempters. (2) Seek confirmation in the knowledge of the right and true, so that you be not deceived by temptations. (3) Seek establishment in the practice of the right and true, so that you may the more successfully withstand and overcome temptations. (4) Above all and in all look to God for help. (d)

**II. Whatever tends to lead into sin should be viewed by the godly as an enemy to be contended against.**

"Vex the Midianites, and smite them; for they vex you with their wiles." Tempters and temptations often present themselves in very winning aspects; the most perilous influences are the most plausible; "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light;" but whatsoever would lead us astray must be resisted as an enemy. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," &c. (Matt. v. 29, 30). (e)

**III. Under certain circumstances war is justifiable.**

It is here commanded by God. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them;" &c.

For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 18-20.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *The certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

(b) The art of seduction from the ways of truth and holiness, discovers the man to be both the child and scholar of the devil. And as wise and painful ministers of Christ, who turn many to righteousness, shall have double glory in heaven; so these subtle and more active agents of the devil, who turn many from the ways of righteousness, will have a double portion of misery in hell.—*J. Flavel*.

The drunkard enkindles his neighbour's lust "putting the bottle to him." O! what a base work are such men employed about! By the law it is death for any to set fire to his

neighbour's house; what then do they deserve that set fire to the souls of men, and that no less than hell-fire?—*W. Gurnall*.

For another illustration on this point, see p. 265.

(c) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 97, 98.

(d) There are temptations in life—temptations at every turning of the street—temptations in all the evolutions of daily circumstances, temptations that come suddenly, temptations that come unexpectedly, temptations that come flatteringly. There is no true, all-conquering, all-triumphant, answer to the temptations of the devil but this—*God!* Be



deep in your religion, have foundations that are reliable, know your calling, and God will protect you when the time of battle and storm and flood shall come. He will do it, if so be we put our trust in Him.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) In carrying out his tempting designs, Satan chooses such instruments as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for his nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is not likely David would have received that from Nabal which he took from Abigail, and thanked her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison: "Curse God and die." Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants,—though she was also within his commission,—as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter the disciple to tempt Christ; at another time His friends and kinfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met with was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off this snare without

heart-breaking: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?"—*W. Gurnoll.*

And now, if it shall be allowed to stand for our excusing, that temptation came to us circuitously, veiled with the mask of virtue, then history has recorded few crimes that can be condemned. The business of our moral vigilance, and the test of our moral strength, is to penetrate the delusion, to tear off the mask, to recognize Satan even through his transformations. We should know our tempters as the sure instincts of innocent hearts know hypocrites, "through the disguise they wear." Perhaps no tyrant, traitor, debauchee, or robber ever lived, who chose depravity for its own sake, or loved sin for its ugliness. If we are to be exculpated because temptation is cunning, oblique, crafty, then Herod was innocent, and Judas has been harshly judged; Nero is an injured man; Benedict Arnold has been misrepresented; and Jeffries and Rochester were rather sinned against than sinning. All our sins creep on us under concealment, creep on us circuitously. Our first lesson of resistance is to learn that Satan is a deceiver, transforms himself, looks an angel.—*F. D. Huntingdon, D.D.*

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *The plague.* See chap. xxv. 9.

Verse 4. *Take the sum of the people.* These words are supplied in the A. V. to fill up an ellipsis; and it seems to us that they are correctly supplied. Or the verse might be read thus: "From twenty years old and upward" (shall ye take the number of the children of Israel) "as the Lord commanded," &c.

Verses 1-4. See pp. 3-7, 10, 11.

Verses 9-11. See pp. 289-312.

Verses 12-14. The tribe of Simeon shows the greatest decrease, as compared with the number taken at Sinai. Then the tribe numbered 59,300; now it numbers only 22,200; which is a decrease of 37,100. Zimri, who was so disgracefully conspicuous in the recent

and terrible transgressions, was a prince of this tribe (chap. xxv. 14). It is probable that his pernicious example was largely followed in the tribe, and consequently that many perished by the plague; hence, the great decrease.

Verse 51. The total number of adult male Israelites, exclusive of Levites, was 601,730; being a decrease of 1,820 from the number taken at Sinai 38 years before. But had it not been for the recent plague, there would have been an increase of more than 22,000.

This chapter does not offer many homiletical suggestions; and some of those which it does offer we have noticed in the numbering of the people at Sinai; our treatment of it will, therefore, be necessarily brief.

THE DIVINE COMMAND AND DIRECTIONS FOR NUMBERING THE PEOPLE.

(Verses 1-4.)

On this subject little need be added to what was said concerning the numbering in the desert of Sinai (see pp. 3-7, 10, 11). The chief differences in the two censuses refer—

i. To the *place* in which the census was taken. That was “in the wilderness of Sinai;” with the Promised Land far away; this was “in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho.” Now their wanderings are over; the land of their destiny and their desire was clearly in view, &c.

ii. To the *time* at which the census was taken. Thirty-eight years have elapsed since the last was taken. During those years many thousands have found their graves in the desert; an entire generation has passed away; a truer and braver generation has arisen.

During those years in several very important respects the history of the nation had been arrested by reason of the sins of the generation which died in the wilderness.

iii. To the *design* with which the census was taken. Several of the purposes which the former numbering served (see pp. 5, 6) would be served by this also. But in addition to those this was intended—(1) as a preparation for the war against Midian, which the Lord had commanded; (2) as a preparation for the conquest of Canaan; and (3) as a preparation for a wise and equitable division of that land amongst the tribes and families of Israel. For the accomplishment of the last-named object this census was absolutely necessary.

THE APPARENT INSIGNIFICANCE AND THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 5-51.)

These uninteresting verses suggest—

I. The apparent insignificance of human life.

How dull are the details, and how wearisome the repetitions of this chapter! What a number of obscure names of unknown persons it contains! Most of them were without doubt very ordinary, common-place people; few were remarkable for intellectual activity or power; many were mean in soul; some were selfish and cowardly; others were base and wicked. Scarcely half a dozen persons can we find mentioned here who were brave or brilliant, noble or noteworthy, great or gifted. As a rule human life, as it appears here, is an ordinary and apparently insignificant thing. And this is a fair representation of human life in our own age and country. In the great majority of instances human lives seem obscure, insignificant, mean; in many instances they seem wicked and worthless. (a)

II. The real importance of human life.

This will appear if we consider that—

1. *Every man has his own individuality of being and circumstances.* No two souls are exactly alike; neither do the circumstances of any two persons correspond in every respect. How interesting does the poorest and dullest life become when we realise that, at least in some respects, it is a unique thing in the universe. (b)

2. *Every man has his own possibilities.* In the most unpromising life great possibilities slumber. “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” As a spiritual being every man is capable of eternal progress and blessedness, or of endless loss and ruin. (c)

3. *Every man has his own influence.* There is no life in the universe which does not affect others for good or for evil. “You cannot live,” as Bushnell

says, "without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others, and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well-nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without, by signs that have no ambiguous expression. If you had the seeds of a pestilence in your body, you would not have a more active contagion than you have in your tempers, tastes, and principles. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble." (d)

4. *Every man has his own accountability.* The man who has but one talent, is as certainly responsible for the use of that one, as the man of five talents is for the use of his five (Matt. xxv. 14-30). "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one," &c. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

5. *Every man is an object of deep interest to God.* To Him nothing is mean, nothing unimportant. He taught His apostles that they "should not call any man common or unclean." He knows what human nature is, and He has evinced the deepest and tenderest concern for its well-being. The poorest and obscurest human life—(1) was created by Him. "Have we not all one

Father? hath not one God created us?" "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. (2) Is sustained by Him. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. . . . In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (3) Was redeemed by Him. Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. v. 15). "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." No creature is too insignificant for the Divine interest, or too obscure for the Divine regard; and His interest and regard attest the importance of every one to whom they are extended. Mark the deep and gracious interest which our Lord manifested in the timid and long-afflicted woman who "touched the hem of His garment" (Mark v. 25-34), and in little children (Matt. xix. 13-15), and in the woman of Samaria (John iv. 4-42), and in many others who would commonly be deemed unimportant, insignificant, and of little worth. (e)

Let us learn never to slight even the lowliest and obscurest of our fellow-creatures. Let us respect human nature, as such, because it is a Divine creation; because it is Divinely redeemed, and because it was the medium of the supreme manifestation of God (comp. Phil. ii. 5-9). (f)

"Honour all men."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You must have already noticed that this chapter is as true as any chapter in human history, especially as it shows so clearly what we ourselves have found out, that the most of people are extremely uninteresting. They are names and nothing more. They are producers and consumers, tenants and taxpayers, and that is all; they are without wit, music, piquancy, enterprise, or keenness of sympathy. They listen to your best anecdotes, and say, "m"; they hear of Livingstone with a shudder; they suppose there must be a great noise at Niagara. Such people were Seth and Enos, Mahalalel and Jared; respectable, quiet, plodding; said "Good night" to one another regularly, and remarked briefly upon the weather, and died. Just what many now-a-days seem to do. Put down on paper everything that has passed between you and

some people, and you will find how very little paper is needed. Now I want to show you that such people are often unjustly estimated, and to remind you that if all stars were of the same size the sky would look very odd, much like a vast chess-board with circles instead of squares.—Joseph Parker, D.D.

(b) We are all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man; the poetic dreamer and the prosaic clown; the daring adventurer and the self-regarding coward; the child of genius and the creature of darkness; yet all claim to be men, and all may theoretically acknowledge the same God and Redeemer. These are facts with which we have to deal, whether we open the Bible or not, whether we acknowledge a system of Divine Providence or not, whether we are atheists or saints.—*Ibid.*



(c) Even the *worst* man has the seal of God upon him somewhere. We must not forget that man is man, whatever be his creed or his status, and that his very *manhood* should be the guarantee of some excellence. The men of the world and the men of the Church are God's; the barren rock is His, as is the glowing garden of the sunniest summer; the worm crawling on the outermost edge of life, and the angel shining above the stars, are both under the care of God. Do not, then, speak of one man as if he were created by the devil, and another as if descended from heaven. Let us even in the worst expect to find some broken ray of former glory, as in the best we shall find some evil which makes us mourn that he is not better still. — *Ibid.*

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 485, 486.

(e) The play and interplay of everything that is within man, and the products of this play and interplay, are all before the mind of God. And He contemplates man, not merely as a creature that is subject to the laws of gravity, of light, of hunger and thirst, and to the wants that the body begets; but as a creature that carries within him a soul-force that is prolific, vastly productive, and full of little unregarded points of history. God sees and

sympathises with all the things that relate to the welfare of man; though they be infinitesimal, though they be fugitive, and though they be unthought of even by the subject of them. There is nothing that can transpire, which has any connection with the moral benefit of His creatures, that God is indifferent to. — *H. W. Beecher.*

(f) Thy Maker has become like thyself. Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not any thing made that was made, is that same Word which tabernacled among us and was made flesh, made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. O manhood, was there ever such news as this for thee! Poor manhood, thou weak worm of the dust, far lower than the angels, lift up thy head, and be not afraid! Poor manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the worms, be not thou abashed, even in the presence of seraphs, for next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between; nay, not next to God, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus, who is God, is man also; Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born, and lived and died as we also do. — *C. H. Spurgeon.*

## THE INTERESTING HIDDEN IN THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verses 5-51.)

### I. Here is the commonplace.

The forty-seven verses before us are prosaic and dull reading. They tell us that the sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; they give us similar details concerning the other sons of Jacob; they tell us that the families of the respective tribes numbered so many, and so many; and they further inform us that certain persons died. And in this long list of names there are very few that have any history connected with them to awaken our interest; and so it certainly seems a monotonous and tedious chapter. But in this respect it resembles human life in all ages and countries. How commonplace, and even humdrum, is the life of by far the greater part of mankind! how uneventful, ordinary, &c. (a)

II. Here is the interesting in the commonplace.

If we look into this chapter carefully we shall discover certain words

which are suggestive of deep and tender interests. *Sons* is a word of frequent occurrence, so also is the word *children*; we also read of *daughters* (ver. 33), and of a *daughter* (ver. 46). A profound human interest attaches to words like these. They imply other words of an interest equally deep and sacred; e.g., *father*, *mother*. Un-speakable and unfathomable solitudes were awakened in the parents' hearts by each child named in this chapter or included in this census. What hopes and fears, what desires and prayers, what wealth of holiest love, gathered round the infancy and childhood of every one of the "six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty" who were "able to go to war in Israel!" The humblest, dullest, most commonplace life has its relations. The least regarded person in all the thousands of Israel was "somebody's bairn."

We also read of *death* (ver. 19);

most of the names which are here recorded belonged to men who were gathered to their fathers; from the time of the twelve sons of Jacob here mentioned to the time of this census in the plains of Moab, many thousands of Israelites had died, of all ranks and of all ages. Reflection upon these facts awakens a mournful interest in the mind. Some had died in infancy, beauteous buds of rich promise, leaving bereaved parents to mourn in pain and sore disappointment. And some had died in young and vigorous manhood, workers smitten down just as they were setting resolutely to work; they passed away leaving many a gentle maiden desolate and heart-stricken. And others had died in life's prime, leaving widows and orphans to mourn their irreparable loss. Loving mothers, too, had heard the home-call, and must needs resign their dear children to the care of other hearts and the tendance of other hands.

Again, frequent mention is made in this chapter of *the family* and of *families*; and these words are suggestive of pure and beautiful associations. Family life involves and promotes mutual affection, and forbearance, and helpfulness; it enshrines and fosters some of the holiest experiences and exercises of which human nature is capable.

Thus in this commonplace census-record we discover themes of profound and perennial interest.

### III. The importance of the common-place.

Impatience of the ordinary and the prosaic is an evidence of an unsound judgment and an unhealthy moral life.

1. *Most of life's duties are commonplace.* The duties of our trade or profession, and the duties of our family and social relations, are, for the most part, unromantic, monotonous, and, many would say, dull. Yet, how important it is that these duties be faithfully fulfilled! (b)

2. *The greater number of persons are commonplace.* Persons characterised by extraordinary endowments, or brilliant abilities, or other marked distinctions, are very rare. The great majority of mankind are plain, prosaic people. (c)

3. *The greater part of life is commonplace.* To say that extraordinary scenes, circumstances, and deeds are very exceptional, is a manifest truism; and yet many persons, in whom the craving for the exciting and the sensational is deep and frequent, need to be reminded of the truism. If the ordinary and common-place be sound and true, all will be well; but if these be corrupt and false, all will be ill. (d)

Be it ours to give the charm of poetry to prosaic duties, by doing them heartily; and to ennoble our commonplace lives, by living them faithfully and holily. (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS

(a) For an illustration on this point, see p. 496.

(b) The best part of human history is never written at all. Family life, patient service, quiet endurance, the training of children, the resistance of temptation,—these things are never mentioned by the historian. The man who burns down an abbey or a minster is immortalised in history; the poor house-wife who makes a pound go as far as thirty shillings, and pinches herself that she may give her boy a quarter's more schooling, is not known even to have lived. Guy Fawkes is known all over the world; but your honest father, who has given you a good example and a good training, is hardly known six doors

away from his own residence. If we remember these things we shall mitigate the contempt with which we are apt to speak of so-called nobodies. Because we admire brilliance we need not despise usefulness. When your little child is ill, he needs kindness more than genius, and it will be of small service to him if his mother is good at epigrams, but bad at wringing out a wet cloth for his burning brow. —Joseph Parker, D.D.

(c) It is wonderful how oddly and whimsically fame is gained: Methuselah is famed because he was the oldest man, and Sampson because he was the strongest man; another is known because he can walk upon a tight rope, and another because he can swim across a

channel. If it were in my power to preach the most splendid sermon ever uttered by mortal lip, not a newspaper in the world would take the slightest notice of it; but if I put up an umbrella in the pulpit or tore the pulpit Bible in two, many a paragraph would report the eccentricity. A splendid sermon would be thought of as interesting only to the few, but an act of folly would be regarded as of universal interest. Thus it is (though it may not seem so) that things get into history. Robertson, of Brighton, was hardly known in his own town during his life-time, whereas another clergyman in Brighton dressed himself in a coat of many colours, and made quite a figure in the principal newspapers. Any man living can have a world-wide notoriety to-morrow, can have his name telegraphed throughout the whole range of civilisation, and be the subject of editorial comment throughout Christendom. Shoot any member of the royal family, and see if this be not so. Everybody knows that Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, but nobody knows that but for you two orphan boys would never have had a chance in life. No preacher has a really world-wide name, known in slums and garrets, backwoods, steamboats, thoroughfares and palaces, who did not in some way get it through "contemptible speech."—*Ibid.*

(d) The circumstances which have most influence upon the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most

part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil affected by a single statesman can bear, to the good or evil of a great social system.—*Lord Macaulay.*

(e) The hour will be dark in which we pine for things romantic at the expense of a quiet and deep life. Christianity teaches us that no child is to be despised, no work is to be considered mean, and that suffering may have all the honour of service. Woe to us when we can live only on stimulants! When the house is accounted dull, when only sensational books can be endured, when music and drama and painted show are essential to our happiness, life has gone down to a low ebb and death is at the door. Let us do our quiet work as if we were preparing for kings, and watch attentively at the door, for the next comer may be the Lord Himself.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

## THE DISTINGUISHED RISING OUT OF THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verse 9.)

### "Famous in the congregation."

There are several persons mentioned in this chapter to whom these words may be applied; some of them being famous for their gifts and virtues, and others, alas! for their failings and vices. Here are—

#### I. Distinguished rebels.

"This Dathan and Abiram, famous in the congregation, strove against Moses," &c. (vers. 9, 10, and chap. xvi. 1-35; and see pp. 289-301, 305-307, 311, 312). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were notorious by reason of—

1. *Their sin*, which comprised envy, rebellion, presumption, and profanity.

2. *Their punishment*. Korah was consumed by fire from Jehovah (see p.

290), and the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram.

Let us regard these prominent sinners as *beacons*, and shun the sins which ruined them.

#### II. Distinguished profaners of sacred ordinances.

"Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered," &c. (ver. 61; Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46).

1. *Their sin*.

2. *Their punishment*. (On both these points see pp. 45, 46.) These profane persons also should be regarded as *beacons*. Shun profanity; be reverent.

#### III. Distinguished leaders and rulers.

"Moses and Aaron" (ver. 64),



"Moses and Eleazar the priest" (ver. 63). Here are three persons honourably distinguished; and Moses especially so.

Moses was famous for—

1. *His great abilities and attainments.* He was eminently gifted and learned. "Moses was learned," &c. (Acts vii. 22).

2. *His saintly character.* Very remarkable is the testimony to this in chap. xii. 3-8. See pp. 219-220. (a) Aaron also was a good man (see pp. 385, 386), and so was Eleazar.

3. *His great mission.* Under the Lord God Moses was the emancipator, the leader, the law-giver, and the ruler of Israel. Aaron, too, had rendered signal and invaluable services to the people. And Eleazar was a useful man.

4. *His extensive influence.* Perhaps no man in any age of the world's history has exercised a more extensive influence than Moses, both as regards time and space. (b)

These honourably distinguished men let us look up to as *examples*, and imitate their excellencies.

#### IV. Distinguished heroes.

"Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (ver. 65). These men were "famous in the congregation" by reason of—

1. *Their faith in God.* See chap. xiii. 30; xiv. 8, 9; and pp. 237, 238.

2. *Their courage in duty.* See pp. 247, 248.

3. *Their faithfulness to God.* Striking testimony is borne concerning Caleb in this respect in chap. xiv. 24 (and see pp. 260-262). And "Joshua's life has been noted as one of the very few which

are recorded in history with some fullness of detail, yet without any stain upon them."

4. *Their eminent services.* Caleb, as one of the spies and as a brave man, and Joshua as a spy, as a general, and as the successor of Moses, rendered illustrious and priceless service to the nation.

5. *Their honourable destiny.* Of all those who were numbered at Sinai, from twenty years old and upwards, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were permitted to enter and possess the Promised Land (vers. 64, 65). This was the reward of their faithfulness, &c.

In them also we have *examples* worthy of imitation in many respects.

#### Lessons.

1. *Mere distinction is not a thing to be coveted.* The character of the distinction is a question of vital importance. (c)

2. *Men may rise to the highest distinctions from the common ranks of their fellow men.* With the exception of the education which Moses received, none of these illustrious men had any advantages of birth, training, or social status; but the reverse. (d)

3. *The highest spiritual distinctions may be attained by every man through Jesus Christ.* By the grace of God eminent goodness is possible to each of us. We may be "made kings and priests unto God" by Jesus Christ. (e)

4. *The supreme importance of personal character and conduct.* We are making our reputation now. A destiny of glory or of shame we are day by day preparing ourselves for.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) To do a good thing or a great thing occasionally is not enough to constitute true nobility of character. At the basis of all such character there must be some diviner elements, and just as those elements are allowed to predominate within do they lend grandeur to all that we do. Just as Jesus taught His disciples that the childlike disposition was essential to their having a place in the kingdom,

so the Great Man must think nothing of his own sacrifices, but do everything in the spirit of perfect self-oblivion. This condition of soul is inseparable from those profounder virtues whose moral force can be determined only by their moral fitness, and which shed the truest glory on every form of human greatness.

Such virtues shone brightly in the man Moses, in whose character we lack no attri-

bute—no excellence. It was the rich and rare combination of these higher qualities which gave strength and completeness to his whole man. Had he been less virtuous he would have been less illustrious. His graces gave lustre and glory to his actions. Pure in the last and lowest recess of his heart, he left the impression of his moral perfection on all that he did. If it be the virtuous soul that truly lives—lives “though the whole world turn to coal,” and burn to ashes, then what must have been the force and the fullness of Moses’s virtue! It was purged from all that is sickly and sentimental, and had in it a strength and a robustness indicative of the man.—*Robert Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) His is indeed a noble character that lives through all time; though formed and built up within the limits of an earthly life, it suffers not from the waste of years; and after the sweep of ages multiplied by ages it retains its integrity and glory, and like some first and fixed star, shines with undiminished light and lustre. It is, in a certain sense, true that all character is deathless—that it is something which survives all the changes and the dissolutions of this lower world, and is destined to come out as an abiding and immutable reality in the future; but they are the few whose principles and whose doings can be recommended as a deeper study, or whose life can be held up as a model for universal imitation. They must be men of rare composition, and in whom meet all the higher and the richer qualities of both the mind and the heart. Theirs must be a sublime consecration to the common good, and they must have no other idea of life than to fulfil the purposes of Heaven and to add to the sum of human happiness. They must not pass their days in any dreamy, visionary sentimentalism; but watching the course of events, must brace themselves up for corresponding action. Catching the inspiration of a higher world, they must be heroic for God and for truth. Here Moses stands first and most conspicuous. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. From the very first the conduct of his people had been such as might have ruffled the most placid bosom, and provoked the meekest spirit, but he was pacific when he might have been militant, patient when he might have been indignant, and even heart-loving when he might have invoked the wrath of Heaven on their heads. His was a noble heart: one purer or truer never beat within a human breast. Noble by nature, he was nobler still in the height and the force of his virtue. Not only is his name hewn out on Time as on a rock, but he “stands on Time as on a pedestal,” with the eyes of all nations

fixed upon him, and with the people of every land offering to him the incense of a loftier praise. His is a name greater than that of the Pharaohs, and a monument his which will outlive the years of the pyramids.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 498. (c)

(d) More true greatness comes from the cottage than the palace. Socrates worked with his father as a statuary; and with chisel in hand had learned to touch the stone into a figure, ere he knew how to reason with philosophers in the schools. Luther came up from the dark deep mines at Mansfield to be the head and the leader of a movement only second in importance to the introduction of Christianity. Richardson, in the humble capacity of a printer’s apprentice, was wont to buy his own candle, that his master might not be defrauded and steal an hour from sleep to improve his mind and lay the foundation for future literary fame. The author of Lorenzo de Medici, surrounded by the dry dust of a lawyer’s office, and with nothing more than the rudiments of a common education, rose to the highest eminence; while Morrison, the Chinese scholar and missionary, laboured at the trade of a last and boot-maker, and kept his lamp from being blown out by so placing a volume of Matthew Henry’s Commentary, as at once to guard the flame, and make it easy for him to lay up its contents in his mind and memory. Genius and greatness are the property of no one class. Heaven bestows His gifts according to His own will, but that will is supremely gracious to every order and every rank. While a Moses is taken from the court of Pharaoh, an Elisha is found following the plough: there is a David tending sheep, as well as a Daniel mingling with princes. If Milton is qualified to be the secretary of the Protector of England, at a crisis in England’s history, Bunyan is Divinely taught to be the guide and the counsellor of his race on their way to glory.—*Ibid.*

(e) The child-spirit is true greatness. “Whoso abaseth himself shall be exalted.” “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” “Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps, and pyramids are pyramids in vales.” A man may be great in grace. By the very necessity of the case all outward distinctions must become less and less, but spiritual attributes endure as long as the being of the soul.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

It seems to me  
 ’Tis only noble to be good.  
 Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
 And simple faith than Norman blood.  
 —*Tennyson.*

## RULES FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 52-56.)

In these directions concerning the division of the land, two rules are laid down:—

i. The extent of each inheritance must be in proportion to the number of persons in each tribe and family. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names," &c. (verses 52-54). Note, *the entire equitableness of this rule, and see in it an illustration of all God's dealings with men in this respect.* "The works of His hands are verity and judgment," &c. (Psalm cxi. 7, 8). "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

ii. The situation of each inheritance must be determined by lot. "Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot," &c. (verses 55, 56). It seems that first, lots were to be drawn for the determination of the general situation of the territory of each tribe, and then these territories were to be divided according to the number of persons in the respective tribes and families. Note, *the wisdom of this arrangement.* It would tend—(1) to prevent dissatisfaction, jealousies, and strife; (2) to inspire in each tribe the persuasion that their inheritance was appointed them by God Himself. The result of the lot was regarded by most nations as determined by God (comp. Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18). So its use was appointed in this case that the Israelities "might rest in that division no less than if it had been done by the immediate voice of God from heaven."

We may further consider these arrangements as an illustration of—

I. The sovereignty of God in bestowing His gifts.

1. *The manifestation of this sovereignty.* It is exhibited (1) in His appointment of the rules for the division of the land; and (2) in His determination of the locality of the territory of each tribe. (a)

2. *The righteousness of His sovereignty.* The rules which He gave to Moses for this important business were conspicuously equitable. (b)

II. The truth that in the arrangements of God provision is made for all His creatures.

By the commands here given to Moses adequate provision is made for every family of Israel. In the order of creation He provided for the supply of human needs before He created man. He makes constant provision for beasts, birds, and all the inferior orders of creation (Psa. civ. 27, 28; cxlv. 15, 16; cxlvii. 9); and shall He not much more regard man and his needs? And as a matter of fact, in return for man's labour, the earth brings forth an abundant supply for the necessities of all men. (c)

Our subject presents to us—

1. *A reason for contentment.* Since God appoints our lot, let us be content with it, and make the best of it. "My times are in Thy hand." "He shall choose our inheritance for us." (d)

2. *A reason for thankfulness.* Let God's provision for us awaken our gratitude to Him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c. (Psa. ciii. 1-5).

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honour upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labours and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort in their whole lives; some

sweat and toil, and what they labour for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather. One hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head. A sceptre is



put into one man's hand, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in dung-hill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the Divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the Maker of the poor as well as the rich (Prov. xxii. 2), not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth and the fulness thereof is His propriety; and He hath as much a right as Joseph had to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins He please.—*Charnocke.*

(b) This dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical, but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If His throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good; because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since He is His own rule, and His nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, He cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom justice, and purity. In all the exercises of His sovereign right, He is never unattended with those perfections of his nature. Might not God by his absolute power have pardoned men's guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of His creatures? but in regard of His truth pawned in His threatening, and in regard of His justice, which demanded satisfaction, He would not. Might not God by His absolute sovereignty admit a man into His friendship, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to His wisdom and holiness, He will not. May He not by His absolute power refuse to accept a

man that desires to please Him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of His goodness and righteousness, He will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God's sovereignty, that He should love it; but in regard of His goodness it is necessary, and He will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of His power, so He never exerts the utmost of His sovereignty; because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render Him perfectly adorable to the creature.—*Ibid.*

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 202.

(d) Are you labouring in a village, and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not, you had better not entertain that notion; it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. "To fill up the sphere we have" should be our duty and our joy. "It is only a nutshell." Well, then, it will take less filling. "It is only a little village." Well, then, you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to abide just where he is. Nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there, he is bound by every consideration that can stir a true man's heart and strength, to make the very best of his position.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 166.

## THE NUMBERING OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 57-62.)

On this subject, comp. chap. iii. 14-22; and see pp. 53-55.

On ver. 61 comp. Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46.

On ver. 62, the last clause, compare chap. xviii. 20; and see pp. 339-347.

## AFFLICTION: ITS TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS.

(Verse 61.)

These words refer to one of the most interesting of the narratives of the Old Testament. It is contained in the tenth chap. of Leviticus. . . .

Alas for Aaron, the father of these young men! His was a bitter portion—to see his sons on whom he had just looked with delight, as set apart for the most honourable of offices, stretched

suddenly at his feet! Not only slain; but slain under circumstances so appalling. They fell not merely in consequence of sin, but whilst in the very act of its commission, without a moment for repentance; so that hope, always ready in such cases to fasten even on straws, could scarcely have found place in Aaron's breast. Could Aaron feel

too deeply, or lament too bitterly the slaughter of his children? Alas! for Aaron, he has more to do than to bear the grievous trial! He must bear it without a sigh, without a tear, as though he felt it not; but sternly acquiesced in the righteousness of the visitation. For no sooner had Nadab and Abihu fallen than Moses delivered the message from God to Aaron—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me; and before all the people I will be glorified." This was nothing but to announce authoritatively to the afflicted father that his sons had died for their sin; and must have added to the anguish which came climbing up for vent. But the message, moreover, required submission. And Aaron exhibited this submission: "Aaron held his peace."

But, surely, he may weep! Surely he and his surviving children may obtain at least that relief which sorrow finds in the being expressed. No! even this is denied him. It would be inconsistent with the sanctity of the priestly office that those who bear it should display any grief at occurrences by which that sanctity has been defended and demonstrated. "And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people." Others, as Moses went on to say, may bewail the dead; but not those who had loved them best, and must feel their loss most. Indeed, it were not easy to exaggerate the greatness of the trial thus allotted to Aaron. It is a beautiful thing in the Christian religion that it is so constructed with a due regard to our natural sensibilities that it neither supposes us stoics, nor seeks to make us such; not demanding of us that we should not sorrow, but only that we should not sorrow even as those who have no hope. Indeed, tears are nature's relief—nature's balm; and, through a mysterious power, they ease the pain by which they are produced. We have cause, then, to be thankful,

not only for the consolation which the Gospel offers so abundantly to the mourning, but for the power and the privilege of weeping. And when ye feel how much of love there is, not only in the chastisement which causes the tears, but in the allowance to shed them, then you may estimate the heaviness of the trial which Aaron had to bear, and you will look at once with commiseration and admiration on the high priest of Israel, as he bends by his dead children, and yet obeys to the letter the rigid command which prevented him showing any of the ordinary indications of grief.

It appears clear, from the remainder of the history, that Aaron, though he suppressed the signs of sorrow, was disquieted at heart, and so overpowered and overcome as scarcely to be master of his actions. . . . Not only was Aaron forbidden to mourn; it was required of him that he should proceed with the business of a complicated ritual—that ritual, of the peril of swerving from which had just been given so tremendous a proof. No wonder, then, if, in his agitation and perplexity, the high priest omit on so trying a day certain prescribed forms, or make mistakes in the performance of his office. This seems to have been exactly what took place. A goat had been offered as a sin-offering, and, according to the Levitical law, the flesh of the sin-offering ought to be eaten by the priest in the holy place. When, however, Moses came to inquire, he found the goat had been burnt without the tabernacle, in place of being eaten according to the law. Then Moses expostulated; fearing, in all likelihood, that this act of disobedience would produce a repetition of the awful scene of the morning. "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place? Ye should, indeed, have eaten it in the holy place as I commanded." And then Aaron, though not immediately addressed, but knowing that the blame was with him, if with any—Aaron took on himself to reply. And we do not think that, in the whole

range of Scripture, there are more plaintive or more pathetic words than his reply. He begins by stating that there had on the whole been due attention to the services of the ministry. "Behold this day have they offered their sin-offering and their burnt-offering before the Lord." . . . He felt, notwithstanding what had been duly done, that there had been a departure from the law, and that it became him to say something to account for it, or to excuse it. But must he enlarge on his affliction, and, by dwelling on its greatness, seek to extenuate his omission? He could not do this. His heart was overflowing; and, if he had once given vent to his feelings, he would have been completely unmanned, and thus would have transgressed the commandment, which forbade his showing grief. He, therefore, trusted himself to give only, as it were, a hint of his sufferings, believing that an affectionate brother could not need more. He only said, "Such things have befallen me!" Oh! what a vast amount of suppressed anguish, of hidden, but agonised feeling, seems gathered into these few syllables, uttered, we may believe, with an almost choked voice—"Such things have befallen me." And then he just ventures a doubt, which would seem to show that he had not acted altogether through inadvertency, but partly from a feeling that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice—"If I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" Moses has nothing to say against this touching reply from his brother. It seems to have satisfied him. And forasmuch as we must regard him as guided through the whole transaction by the immediate direction of God, we may consider that the answer of Aaron was such as found acceptance with the Almighty himself. Moses was the instrument in making known the Divine will; and he was "*content*"—that is the expression in Scripture.

Now, it is upon this CONTENTMENT of Moses, considered as expressive of

the approval of God, that we design to ground the remainder of our discourse.

The case with which we are presented is simply this, There is a man who is suffering beneath the oppression of extraordinary affliction. His grief causes him to neglect some portion of religious duty, or incapacitates him, as he imagines, for its discharge. Undoubtedly he is to blame; but God, who knoweth our frailty, remembering we are but dust, accepts in excuse the greatness of his sorrow; and restrains the vengeance which the fault might have otherwise provoked.

Let us separate the case from its original circumstances; and let us see whether we may not expect, whenever there is a similar case, that there will be a similar acceptance of the severity of sorrow in excuse for some failure of duty. . . . Grief tends to unfit us for religious duties, while it makes more essential their unwearied discharge. We can never have greater need to study the Bible, never greater to offer petitions to God, than when visited with trouble; and yet it is often more than commonly hard, when trouble is upon us, to fix attention on Scripture, or be instant in prayer. The Christian will, on that very account, write bitter things against himself, and aggravate his suffering by self-reproach and condemnation.

It not unfrequently happens that cases such as this fall within the observation of the minister. He visits an individual, perhaps the mother of a family, from whom there has been suddenly snatched away an object of deep love. He finds her scarcely able to exert any control over her feelings. She can do little but weep and utter complaints to show the anguish of her soul. And it is no part of the Christian minister's office to upbraid the mourner, as though it were not lawful to sorrow thus bitterly. He will rather show by his expressions of sympathy that he is fully sensible of the greatness of her affliction, and will mingle his tears with hers in just tribute to the dead. But then it will be his endeavour to impress



on the sufferer the duties of affliction, urge to the striving to be resigned to God's will, and to the finding consolation in God's Word. And this will bring out fresh complaint; the sufferer will lament that she cannot pray; that the heart seems turned to stone, so that when she has most need of religion, she has become altogether incapacitated for its duties. What should bind her to her Maker seems only to estrange her more from Him. Indeed, this would be a perplexing case for the minister, if he were not warranted in replying, that great grief, by its very nature, stupefies the mind, and that God is too gracious to impute to His children omissions or failures which such grief may occasion. He may say to the sufferer that she is not to try her religion by what it is when stunned by the blow; and that her Creator, who can accurately distinguish between wilful neglect, and that produced by the bewilderment of an overwrought spirit, will assuredly not be extreme in marking what he knows anguish has kept her from performing. He will never be warranted in telling an offender that he might safely neglect religious duties; but when he finds that affliction has caused certain duties to be neglected, and that the neglect was one of the things which pressed on the conscience, he is warranted, we believe, in referring to the contentment of Moses, when he had heard Aaron's answer, and endeavouring so to soothe the agitated parent. And this does not less hold good under circumstances of sickness. It is beyond all dispute, that bodily pain is a most engrossing thing; so that whilst it is being endured, the soul, in general, can do little more than sympathise with its suffering tenement. Even the righteous, when dread sickness is on them, feel disabled for spiritual exercises, though conscious that they were never more in need of communion with God. Accordingly, one continually hears complaints from pious persons, as disease bears them down, that they cannot fix their minds as they desire on heavenly things; that they cannot pray with fervency, much

less rejoice in tribulation. The just way of dealing with these persons, seems to be that of requiring them to take their difficulties into account when they would estimate their spiritual condition. They do utterly wrong in judging of what they *are* on a sick bed, by what they *do* on a sick bed, and feel, as they toss to and fro, that they cannot find rest. I never ask how a Christian died; but how a Christian lived.

We have a few words to say on another supposition—namely, that it was not through inadvertence, but rather through design, as feeling himself but ill-prepared to eat the sin-offering, that Aaron did not exactly conform to the prescriptions of the law. If you consider the words which Aaron uses—"And if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" you may judge that Aaron had probably imagined that it would be better for him to burn the sin-offering, though contrary to law, than to eat it with heaviness of heart. There was perhaps a feeling in him that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice. And if this were the case, we must gather from the contentment which Moses expressed—not perhaps that he acquiesced in the reasons which Aaron alleged—but that even a mistake, when caused by a reverential fear of the mysteries of religion, will be looked upon compassionately by God, who reads the heart.

Now we would imitate Moses in this particular, and not deal harshly with those who, from the same reason as Aaron, neglected to feed on the sin-offering, in and through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It may be true that the majority of those who absent themselves from the sacrament, absent themselves in contempt of so awful a mystery, or in assumed respect for, which is but a cloak for determination not to separate from the world. But there are some who are tremblingly alive to the sacredness of the ordinance; who would receive it if they dared, but who are withheld by a consciousness of

their sinfulness, a sinfulness which they deplore and long to remove. This was Aaron's case, and God forbid that this should be harshly dealt with! They are under a mistake; but their mistake is in one sense only an excellence. We would teach them that their feeling of unfitness constitutes their fitness for the sacrament or "means of grace," which is not for those (if such there are) who have no sins to struggle with and lament. We would thus not upbraid them with their mistake, but endeavour to show that it was only to be proved in order to its being corrected. We do not suppose that Moses would have been "content," had he

found on successive days that the sin-offering had not been eaten. He had said enough to show that Aaron was wrong; but whilst abstaining from reproving for the past, he undoubtedly expected that he would obey the law for the future. It is the same with those whom an habitual sense of unworthiness has withheld from the sacrament. They may plead their excuse whilst they have not been duly taught what the sacrament requires from its recipients; but it partakes of the nature of sin, if they continue absent when they know that a feeling of unworthiness is the very thing required.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

### THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

(Verses 63-65.)

In these verses we have a triple illustration of the Divine faithfulness:—

I. The faithfulness of God to His threatenings.

"These are they that were numbered," &c. (vers. 63-65). The judgment which God pronounced thirty-eight years previous He has now completely fulfilled (comp. chap. xiv. 11-39; and see pp. 250—252, 257, 258, 263-265).

(a)

1. The immense number of the condemned does not avail for the escape of any one of them. Sentence was passed upon upwards of six hundred thousand men; "and there was not left a man of them." "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21).

2. The lapse of time before the complete execution of the sentence does not avail for the escape of any one. Thirty-eight years passed away before the judgment pronounced was fully carried out; but ultimately not one upon whom it was passed escaped. "Because sentence against an evil work is not,"

&c. (Eccles. viii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 3-10).

(b)

II. The faithfulness of God to His purposes.

Though God completely cut off that rebellious generation; yet for the carrying out of His own plans He raised up another and far superior generation (comp. chap. xiv. 12, 31; and see pp. 251, 264). (c)

III. The faithfulness of God to His promises.

He promised to spare Caleb and Joshua, and to bring them unto the Promised Land (chap. xiv. 23, 30); and He spared them, and in due season brought them into that land (see pp. 258, 264). (d)

Here is encouragement to trust Him. Conclusion.

The great lesson of the subject is a solemn warning against unbelief. This warning is urgently enforced in Heb. iii. 7—iv. 2. Let us give earnest heed unto it, so that at last we may enter into the perfect and heavenly rest.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 225, 374.

(b) God says, "To-day I will work a wonder in your eyes; ye shall see marvellous things; I will beat down the proud throne and the great mountain." He says that, and then leaves us there. And a thousand years go by; the proud throne is still there, and the great mountain rears its shoulders through a thousand summers and a thousand winters. Men say, "The word has been forgotten." But the word is there. It is a factor in human history, and is working, and will work. It may be in ten thousand years the word comes up, and the men of the day say to one another, "All this is done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 312.

(c) It is necessary to our conception of an infinitely perfect Being, that we admit an *eternal purpose* regarding all that He has done or said. The idea of experiments undertaken and abandoned is, so far as He is concerned, utterly untenable. So is that of a change of purpose. "He is of one mind." He has purposed all He does, and He does or will do all He has purposed. Whether He create a world, or redeem a man, it is in pursuance of His *eternal will* that it should be so.—*W. Leask, D.D.*

(d) If He enters into engagements, promises, and covenants, He acts with perfect freedom. These are acts of grace to which He is under no compulsion; and they can never, therefore, be reluctant engagements which He would wish to violate, because they flow from a ceaseless and changeless inclination to bestow benefits, and a delight in the exercise of goodness. They can never be made in haste or unadvisedly; for the whole case of His creatures to the end of time is before Him, and no circumstances can arise which to Him are new or unforeseen. He cannot want the power to fulfil His promises, because He is omnipotent; He cannot promise beyond His ability to make good, because His fulness is infinite; finally, "He cannot deny Himself," because He is "not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent;" and thus every promise which He has made is guaranteed, as well by His natural attributes of wisdom, power, and sufficiency, as by His perfect moral rectitude.—*Richard Watson.*

Every promise is built upon four pillars:—God's *justice* or holiness, which will not suffer Him to deceive; His *grace* or goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; His *truth*, which will not suffer Him to change; and His *power*, which makes Him able to accomplish.—*H. G. Salter.*

For additional illustrations on God's faithfulness, see p. 460.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The request made by the daughters of Zelophehad arose naturally out of the census, which was taken with a view to the distribution of the land amongst the people, and the Divine directions for the distribution, both of which are recorded in the previous chapter.

Verse 1 (comp. chap. xxvi. 29, 33).

Verse 2. *All the congregation* "denotes the college of elders, which represented the congregation and administered its affairs."

*The door of the tabernacle*, i.e., where the elders met in solemn assembly.

Verse 3. *Died in his own sin.* Zelophehad had not taken part in any of the rebellions which had been avenged by special judgments, but had died "under the general sentence of ex-

clusion from the land of promise passed on all the older generation."

Verse 12. *This mount Abarim* (see notes on chap. xxi. 20).

Verse 13 (see chap. xx. 23-29).

Verse 14 (see chap. xx. 7-13).

Verse 16 (comp. chap. xvi. 22).

Verse 18. *In whom is the spirit*, i.e., "The spiritual endowment requisite for the office he was called to fill."

Verse 20. *Of thine honour*; "i.e. of thy dignity and authority. Joshua was constituted forthwith vice-leader under Moses, by way of introduction to his becoming chief after Moses's death."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *He shall stand before Eleazar, &c.* In this respect Joshua did not enjoy the exalted privilege of Moses (comp. chap. xii. 6-8; Deut. xxxiv. 10).



*The judgment of Urim, &c.* Rather, "the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah." "Urim is an abbreviation for Urim and Thummim, and denotes the means with which the high priest was instructed of ascertaining the Divine will and counsel in all the important business of the congregation."

—*Keil and Del.* What these means were we do not know. "‘Light and perfection’ would probably be the best English equivalent" for the words Urim and Thummim. See an excellent article on the subject by Professor Plumptre in Dr. Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

## THE REQUEST OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD: THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

(Verses 1-11.)

Consider—

I. The request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

1. *Was presented in an orderly and becoming manner.* "They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest," &c. (verse 2). They made their request in a regular manner, and to the proper authorities.

2. *Was eminently fair and reasonable.* While their father, by reason of sin, was in common, with the generation to which he belonged, excluded from the Promised Land, yet he had not done anything for which his children should be deprived of an inheritance therein. And it certainly does not seem reasonable that they should be so deprived because they were all daughters—that they should be disqualified because of their sex. (a)

3. *Indicated becoming respect for their father.* They vindicate him from the guilt of sharing in any of the rebellions except the general one; and they evince an earnest desire for the perpetuation of his name and family. If no inheritance were granted to them as his heirs, then his name would cease from among his family. But if a possession among the brethren of their father were granted to them, then his name would be preserved: for when an heiress of landed property became a wife, her husband married into her family rather than she into his, and "the sons who inherited the maternal property were received through this inheritance into the family of their mother, i.e., of their grandfather on

the mother's side." We have examples of this in the case of Jair, who was reckoned a Manassite, though his father was a descendant of Judah (chapter xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 14; 1 Chron. ii. 21, 22), and in the case of Jarha and his wife, the daughter of Sheshan (1 Chron. ii. 34, 35).

4. *Implied faith in the promise of God to give Canaan to the Israelites.* Though the Canaanites were in full possession of the land, and the Israelites had not even entered therein, yet they ask for their portion as if the land were already possessed by their people.

5. *Implied an earnest desire for a portion in the Promised Land.*

II. The Divine answer to their request.

1. *Was given by Jehovah to Moses in response to his enquiries.* "And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses," &c. Notice here—(1) The humility of Moses. He does not presume to decide the case himself, &c. (2) The direction which God grants to the humble. "The meek will He guide in judgment," &c.

2. *Commended the cause of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right."

3. *Granted the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "Thou shalt surely give them a possession, &c." (ver. 7). (b)

4. *Included a general law of inheritance.* "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (vers. 8-11). Thus a great benefit accrued to the nation from the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Some disabilities still accrue to woman, especially in respect to property, and just payment for her labour. Tasks that she is fully competent to every way, public opinion and false custom will not let her do, cruelly telling her she shall sooner starve; and for work that she actually does as well and as rapidly as her companion, man, she receives only a quarter of his wages; both of which are wrongs that Christianity rebukes as clearly as it does slavery or defalcation, and wrongs that Christian men must speedily remedy, or else cease to be Christians, and well-nigh cease to be men.

For the wrongs that remain to her position, and the disabilities that man's too selfish and partially Christianized nature has not yet removed, let her not, in the name of all that is lovely and all that is skilful, go to separatist conventions, nor to the platform, nor to the novel schemes of political economy, or social re-organization; but to that moral tribunal, where she is as sure to win her cause at last as the sunlight is to compel a summer. Let her take up and wield the spiritual sovereignty that is her everlasting birthright. Let her understand—what so few of her sex have been willing to learn to this hour—the power lodged in her whole spirit and voice and look and action for or against the kingdom of Heaven. Let her be content with the possession and exercise of power, in all its higher forms, without that appendage which unhalloved pride is for ever insisting on—the name of it. Let her unfold every nobler faculty that our imperfect social state invites; and then be sure that the social state will ripen into more perfect humanities, and full justice come at last. Let her be the brave domestic advocate of every virtue, the silent but effectual reformer of every vice, the unflinching destroyer of falsehood, the generous patroness of intelligence, the watcher by slandered innocence, the guardian of childhood, the minister of Heaven to home, the guide of orphans, the sister of the poor, the disciple of Christ's holy Church. On Jesus of Nazareth,—all fails except for this,—on the Saviour's heart, let her rest her unchangeable and unassailable hope, her unquestioning trust, her unconquerable love.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) Is it nothing for woman to remember, when her sex is made the type and tabernacle of Love, that we have ascribed the loftiest glory even to the Almighty Father when we have said that His name is Love? Is it nothing to her that her place in society and

her powers in the world correspond to her character? That while she shares with man, in honourable and often equal measure, certainly in these modern times, every intellectual privilege, literary accomplishment, and public function—authorship, the chair of science, the throne of state—she yet has a realm all her own, sacred to her peculiar ministry, where she reigns by a still diviner right? Is it nothing that it is her face which first bends over the breathing child, looks into his eyes, welcomes him to life, steadies his uncertain feet until they walk firmly on the planet? Suppose man were the natural enemy of woman; consider that from his birth, for the first ten years of his life, he is put into her hands, with scarcely a reservation or exception, to be impressed, moulded, fashioned into what she will,—so that, if he were born a wild tiger, her benignity would have its opportunity to tame him; consider that it has been historically demonstrated that scarcely a single hero, reformer, statesman, saint, or sage, has ever come to influence or adorn his age, from Jacob to Washington, who was not reared by a remarkable mother that shaped his mind; and then ask whether it is not equal folly for woman to claim the name of power, and for man to deny her the possession.

There is hardly a walk of public or private life where female talent is not heartily honoured, and does not command its deserved success. The fine arts, the sciences, classical learning, social reform, philosophy, education, empire,—all are represented at this day by accomplished women. Do they suffer detriment, or loss of influence, because they are women? Is Mrs. Somerville, or Miss Mitchell, less esteemed among the scientific minds of the age for her sex? Does not the whole British kingdom learn a heightened regard for woman from the womanly character it beholds in its Queen? Is there a department of knowledge from which woman is now, by our modern systems of education, shut out? Must it not be very soon true that her power shall be proportioned to her energy, and her influence be measured only by her merit? Probably the larger proportion of scholarship and public enterprise will still be with men—the providential constitution of the sexes justifies that expectation; but when exceptions appear, the demand of Christian liberty is, that they be welcomed, recognised and rewarded.—*Ibid.*

## THE SERVANT OF GOD SUMMONED HOME.

(Verses 12-14.)

The intimation here given to Moses of his approaching death suggests the following observations:—

I. That sin is an evil of the greatest gravity.

The Lord here informs the great leader of Israel that he must shortly relinquish his charge and lay down his bodily life. But why must Moses die at this time? Not because he was worn out either physically or mentally: "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated;" and his splendid valedictory charge to the people shows that his mind had lost nothing either of force or of fire. Nor has he to die at this time because he has outlived his usefulness. he is still the most useful man of all the thousands of Israel. He has to die because of his sin "at the water of Meribah." "Ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes" (comp. chap. xx. 2-13, and see pp. 372, 373). Moses besought the Lord that he might be permitted to enter "the good land that is beyond Jordan;" but the Lord "would not hear" him (Deut. iii. 23-27). Thus God manifests His abhorrence of sin, and testifies to its heinousness. (a)

II. That God is the absolute Sovereign of human life.

This great truth is strikingly illustrated in the death of Moses. Neither from disease, nor from the exhaustion of the vital forces, nor from accident, nor from external violence, does the great and good man die; but because God wills his death. To the man who recognises and obeys God's laws, and seeks to live in harmony with His will, death cannot come either prematurely or accidentally. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my ap-

pointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth," &c. "Thou hast made my days as an hand-breath." "Thou turnest man to destruction," &c. "My times are in Thy hand." (b)

This sovereignty of God over our life should—

1. *Lead us to seek for conformity to His will.* Manifestly it is both our duty and interest so to do.

2. *Encourage us in the prosecution of worthy aims.* "Man is immortal till his work is done."

III. That inspiring visions are often granted to the good as they approach the close of their earthly career.

"The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel." It was in mercy that God permitted him to survey the goodly land. Vast and splendid was the prospect from the heights of Nebo. "Even the city of Heshbon itself, stood upon so commanding an eminence, that the view extended at least thirty English miles in all directions, and towards the south probably as far as sixty miles." As to Moses it was granted to behold the extent and beauty of the Promised Land before his death (Deut. xxxiv. 1-4), so the most glorious spiritual prospects are often vouchsafed to godly souls as they draw near the close of their pilgrimage. This was the case with Stephen: "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven," &c. (Acts vii. 55-60). And with Paul: "I am now ready to be offered," &c. (2 Tim. iv. 6-8). See p. 419. (c)

IV. That through the gates of death the good enter upon scenes of congenial social life.

"And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." See p. 379. (d)



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When Moses, instead of giving prompt and cheerful obedience to the command of God, yielded in an evil moment to the peevishness and the pettishness of his own temper, not only did he come short of the Divine purpose, and fail to glorify God in the sight of His people, but He became subject to serious privation and peculiar loss. As the punishment of his disobedience, he was precluded from entering the Promised Land. Though permitted to come to its very border, and though, from Pisgah's proud and lofty height, he was allowed to cast his eye over its fair and enchanting scenery, his feet never pressed its sacred soil, and ere his favoured nation had taken possession of the long-looked-for inheritance, his eyes were closed in death. Nothing is more natural than to suppose that after the toils and the strifes—the struggles and the sufferings of an arduous and devoted life, his heart thrilled with delight in the prospect of the earthly Canaan, and that it would have added much to the happiness of his old age had he been suffered to enter the good land, and there to have found a home and a grave. But this was denied to Him—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

It seems certain that this death on Pisgah, and this sight of the Promised Land, was designed partly to humble and partly to gratify Moses; partly as a mortification, and partly as an honour; partly as a punishment and partly as a pleasure. It must have mortified him somewhat to be brought to the verge of the object of his long ambition and deep-felt desire, and then to have it removed out of his sight; to say to himself, "Not a child in all that camp, but is more favoured than I: never shall I cross that Jordan, or visit those sacred spots where my fathers lived, worshipped and died: I alone, amongst these millions, am denied this privilege." But, on the other hand, while Aaron was not permitted to behold that land, but died with the great and terrible wilderness around him, Moses saw its beauty, felt a breeze wafted from its balmy air upon his dying brow, and expired while embracing it, as it were in the arms of his love and admiration. He saw, too, on the other hand, his people compacted into a powerful community, girt and armed for the contest; pawing like a lion ere setting their terrible feet upon the enemies' soil, led by a man and warrior after his own heart, with the tabernacle of God in their midst, and the cloud of the pillar hovering over them, and this sight serves to give an additional consolation and joy to his departing spirit. What an honour, too, to be watched over and tended so carefully by the Most High! Moses stripped off Aaron's garments, and Eleazar assisted him; but the

whole circumstances of the scene at Pisgah were arranged by the hand of God. He breathed on His servant and gave him death.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 381, 382. (b)

(c) Privilege as well as punishment is often connected with the death of God's people, and He often proves how precious in His sight is the death of His saints, by giving them in their last moments bursts of insight and glimpses of glory. Moses was alone on the mount at the time, and perhaps he was the only man, at all events the only eminent saint of God, who on the literal Pisgah ever died. But the path to the spiritual Pisgah is well-worn, and many a pious soul has found it a Mount Clear, and seen from it a little of the "glory of the land." . . . Words of rapture, of calm and sober yet profound and thrilling joy, have come forth from the lips of the departing children of God. Biography teems with these. How the martyred reformers and covenanters died, each of them with some cheering Scripture word, like a scroll of glory, on his lips, such as, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly;" "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ;" "None but Christ; none but Christ." The famous Thomas Halyburton lay for weeks on his death-bed, and it seemed to have been uplifted by the hands of angels nearer to heaven as he lay upon it, and breathed out his ardent soul in words of ecstasy. In later times we find a Payson speaking of the "Sun of Righteousness becoming larger, brighter, and broader to his soul as he was drawing nigh it;" a Hall crying, "I have a humble hope, which I would not exchange for all worlds;" the young and lovely Mrs. Shepherd, whose interest in his salvation almost melted the heart of Byron himself, saying, as she lay a-dying, "God's happiness, God's happiness," words which seemed to mean, "That is the only happiness deserving the name, and I am going to inherit it above;" and the great Coleridge, who amidst many aberrations of intellect and life died at last a meek disciple of Jesus, and dictated on his death-bed these lines as his epitaph:—

"Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame,  
He asked and hoped through Christ—do  
thou the same."

These persons were verily in their last hours exalted to one or other of the peaks of Pisgah, and received extraordinary testimonies of the presence and favour of God.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations on this point, see p. 420. (b)

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 382. (c)

A MODEL ORDINATION SERVICE.

(Verses 15-23.)

In this paragraph there are several things which deserve notice.

i. *The solicitude of Moses for the carrying on of God's work.* This was his great concern when he knew that the time of his departure was at hand. "Moses spake unto the Lord saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits," &c. (vers. 15-17).

ii. *The noble unselfishness of Moses.* He does not seek the appointment of one of his sons as his successor. Already the high priesthood has been settled in the family of Aaron, and it would have been a very natural thing if Moses had asked that one of his sons might succeed him in his office; but he leaves the appointment entirely with the Lord.

iii. *The directions of the Lord for the ordination of the successor of Moses* (vers. 18-21).

iv. *The carrying out of these directions by Moses* (vers. 22, 23).

Although the ordination of Joshua was to the office of chief magistrate, yet we may regard it as illustrating a Model Ordination Service to the Christian Ministry. What an interesting ordination service this was! With Canaan so near, and the great leader so soon to pass away, and the recollections of the sinful strife at Meribah and of his sin there, which caused his passing away at this time, so clear—this service must have been deeply impressive. What a charge Moses would give! And how solemn would it be to Joshua as he pondered on the reason why Moses was leaving them then! And how full of instruction and warning to the congregation!

In our day an ordination is regarded by some as merely a thing of ecclesiastical etiquette; and by others as a kind of religious banquet, at which able men will preach eloquent sermons, and an intellectual and emotional feast will be provided. Let us correct such notions

by the consideration of this ordination, the directions for which were given by God. This ordination suggests—

I. That the person ordained should be chosen of God for his work.

Moses asked the Lord to "set a man over the congregation," &c. (verses 16, 17). "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua," &c. So now the Christian minister should be—

1. *Called by God to His work.* (a)

2. *Appointed by God to his sphere of work.* As the Head of the Church, Christ is deeply concerned in the selection and appointment of its ministers. He both calls His under-shepherds, and appoints them their spheres. The minister himself should feel that he holds his commission and appointment from the Lord. Such a conviction will be to Him an inspiration and strength, &c.

There is one distinguishing characteristic in every man whom God calls; they are all, like Joshua, men "in whom is the Spirit." They are endowed by God with the spiritual qualifications for the discharge of their sacred duties. The Divine call and the Divine qualification are invariably associated. (b)

II. That the ordination is to the most important work.

Joshua was ordained to preside over the Israelites and direct them in all their affairs. "Set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them," &c.

How unspeakably important are the duties of the Christian minister! It is his to publish the glad tidings, to instruct the people of his charge, to counsel, to warn, to rebuke, to encourage, &c. (c)

"'Tis not a cause of small import

The pastor's care demands;

But what might fill an angel's heart,

And filled a Saviour's hands."

—Doddridge.

III. That the ordination should be conducted by tried men.

Joshua was ordained by Moses alone. But in the ordination of Timothy, Paul was assisted by the elders of the Church (1 Tim. iv. 14). The cases were different. Joshua was to be chief magistrate; but Timothy was ordained to a purely spiritual ministry. The forms of government also were much altered. Moses's time joined on to the days of patriarchal government; but it was far otherwise in Paul's day. But in both cases they were proved men, men of experience and of good reputation, holy and honoured men. So should it ever be in ordinations to the Christian ministry.

IV. The ordination should be accompanied with the imposition of hands.

"Take thee Joshua . . . and lay thine hand upon him." This was done as a sign of the transference of the government to him, and of the consecration of the Holy Ghost upon him. "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv. 9). The imposition of hands is a natural and impressive form for the expression of benediction; and seems to have been so used in all ages (comp. Gen. xlviii. 14; Matt. xix. 13, 15; Acts vi. 6; viii. 17; ix. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6. (d))

V. That the ordination should include a charge to the ordained.

"Give him a charge." The duties and responsibilities of the office should be laid before those who are being set apart to it; and the experience of godly and approved men should be made available for the direction of the inexperienced. What wise and inspiring things Moses would say to Joshua in this charge! What sage counsels drawn from his ripe experience, &c.! Nothing is more natural and becoming than to give a charge to any one entering upon new and solemn relationships and duties. The parent gives a charge to his son as he goes forth from home to the battle and burden of life, &c. The veteran who has been in many a battle

is well able to counsel the recent recruit, who is about to gird on the armour for the first time.

VI. That the ordination should be conducted in the presence of the people.

"Set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight." The Christian minister should be ordained in the presence of the congregation, because the office to which he is being set apart is one involving mutual obligations. Moreover, such an arrangement—

1. *Is more impressive to the person being ordained.* There present with him are the immortal souls for whom he has to live and labour.

2. *Tends to influence the people beneficially.* As they hear of the important duties and solemn responsibilities of their minister, they should be awakened to deeper solicitude and more earnest prayer on his behalf, and to heartier co-operation with him. (e)

VII. The ordination should confer honour upon the person ordained.

"Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (comp. Deut. xxxiv. 9).

To serve God in the ministry of redemptive truth is a great honour, even to the holiest and ablest of men—to be an "ambassador for Christ," &c. (f) But in addition to this, when a number of experienced and honoured ministers, who know the person they are about to "lay hands on," unite to ordain him "before all the congregation," by that act they declare that they, knowing him, regard him as a fit and proper person for the holy office of the Christian minister; and so they put of their honour upon him, that the people of his charge may have ampler ground for respecting and trusting him. For this reason, those who take the chief duties in an ordination service should be personally acquainted with him whom they ordain.

VIII. That a person so chosen of



God, should seek special direction from Him, and seeking, shall obtain it.

"And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest," &c. (ver. 21). The general principle here suggested we take to be this,—that every man who is called of God to special responsibilities, should seek and shall obtain special help to fit him for those responsibilities. That such was the case with the Apostles, we see from Matt. xxviii. 18-20; John xiv. 26; and xvi. 12, 13. This should serve—

1. *As a warning against self-sufficiency.* The great Apostle of the Gentiles writes, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves," &c. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). Again he asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

2. *As a source of encouragement and strength.* We have access to the infinite resources of the Most High God. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c. "Our sufficiency is of God," &c. (g).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 23 (a), 50 (c), and 326 (a).

(b) For illustrations on ministerial qualifications, see pp. 328, 329.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 62 (a) and (b).

(d) The laying-on of hands had been, from the time when Moses was directed to lay hands upon Joshua, the regular recognized manner of appointing to an office in the Church of God; and it was just adopted by the Christian Church from having prevailed by God's own command in the Jewish. It is of course a significant appointment; an appointment signifying the delegation of authority to do that which the person appointing is empowered thus to appoint another to perform. Further than that we cannot say respecting it. It is accompanied always with prayer: and the laying-on of hands would probably be considered to denote that that which was applied for in the prayer was granted to the prayer and conveyed to the person appointed. That would seem to be the explanation of the gesture in thus appointing, in the simplicity of the primitive Church.—*H. Alford, D.D.*

(e) It is a popular error to suppose that a gig can go on one wheel. The minister must have the co-operation of his hearers. They must be workers together. The minister cannot beg, and organize, and visit, and preach, and preside—get up bazaars, establish societies, collect for chapel debts, tell anecdotes at sewing meetings, and reconcile all the differences which arise between two-and-ninence and half-a-crown. He is called to preach the Gospel—work enough for the strong st powers! Let him be encouraged and honoured in his holy vocation.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(f) Let those who sustain the character of Christian ministers, think what a Master they serve, and in how great a work they are engaged! How little all the titles which the princes of this world can give must appear, when compared with that of the ministers of Jesus, and a servant of God, in the salvation of souls! How low the employments of secular life are, even those in which the nobles and kings of the earth are engaged, in comparison with theirs!—*Philip Doddridge, D.D.*

(g) Brothers! "our sufficiency is of God." Let us betake ourselves to the "throne of the heavenly grace," for our strength must be maintained by prayer. The suppliant leaves the altar clothed with power; the breath of his own prayer is returned into his spirit as an inspiration from heaven. The hope of the ministry is in PRAYER. To the devout mind, the sacred page is lighted with unearthly splendour; on the prayerful intellect, the noblest thoughts alight in their descent from the Eternal Intelligence; on the contrite heart, God bestows the most enriching bliss. Minister of Christ! wouldst thou study profitably? *Pray much.* Wouldst thou preach with soul-arousing energy? *PRAY MUCH.* Wouldst thou edify the believer, reclaim the wanderer, abash the blasphemer, and thrill the indifferent? *PRAY MUCH.* "Them that honour Me I will honour." The pulpit of the prayerful minister will be the scene of most brilliant conquest,—from it will stream the banner of glorious triumph; and instead of appropriating the honour to himself, the minister will exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

"THE GOD OF THE SPIRITS OF ALL FLESH."<sup>\*</sup>

(Verse 16.)

**"The God of the spirits of all flesh."**

Various ways in which we become impressed by Scripture with a sense of the value of the soul—histories of Scripture—promises of Scripture—great transactions of Scripture—Redemption. Now let us learn the same lesson by contemplating the powers of the soul itself, especially in its connection with God.

Our text brings God and man together—spirits and the God of spirits.

I. The affecting view here furnished of the agency and dominion of God in connection with the human mind.

It is affecting. The power of other agents extends chiefly to the body. The oppressor holds the body bound; but knows not what a range the spirit takes unconscious of a chain.

1. *God imparts the powers of the spirit.* We have nothing self-derived. "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." But what is spirit? Of its essence we know nothing—only its properties. We know only the properties and attributes of matter,—hard, soft; hot, cold; wet, dry; resistance, &c.

So of the spirit—by its properties, powers, affections. I see that God has made it like Himself—a being of intellectual order; capable of knowledge, wisdom, devotion; and, like its Author, capable of communicating its own happiness and impressions; and especially, like its Author, capable of purity.

2. *He claims the affections of the spirit.*

3. *He heals the disorders and sympathises with the sorrows of the spirit.*

4. *He alone can constitute the happiness of the spirit.*

5. *He will decide upon the future destiny of the spirit.*

II. The moral uses of these contemplations.

1. *Let them teach you reverence for the human mind.*

2. *Let them impress you with thoughts of the vast importance of personal religion.*

3. *Let it inspire you with practical efforts to benefit and bless society.* By education—by missions, &c.

4. *Let it kindle hope for the prospects of the human race.*—Samuel Thodey.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this and the next chapter the laws for the ordering of the worship of the people in their sacrifices and on their great festivals, most of which had been given already, are completed and presented in regular order. During the wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites could not have carried out fully so elaborate a system of ceremonial worship. And now, with their settlement in Canaan so near, the whole law for their sacrificial worship is appropriately promulgated.

Verses 3-8 (comp. Exod. xxix. 38, 42).

Verse 7. *Strong wine.* שֵׁכָר = strong drink. It is perhaps used here for יַיִן = wine.

Verses 9, 10. The Sabbath-offering, now first commanded.

Verses 11-15. The offering at the new moons, also now first commanded. The observance of the new moon had been enjoined before (chap. x. 10); but now the offerings are specified for the first time.

\* For another homiletic sketch and illustrations on this text see pp. 302-305.

Verses 16-25 (comp. Exod. xii. 3-28; xiii. 3-10; Lev. xxiii. 4-8; chap. ix. 1-5; and see pp. 139-143).

Verses 26-31 (comp. Lev. xxiii. 15-22; Deut. xvi. 9-12).

Most of the Homiletic topics suggested by this chapter have already been dealt with in "*The Preacher's*

*Comm.*"; some of them in the work on Exodus, and others in our own work on this book. On the significance of the different kinds of offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116; on the Passover, see pp. 139-143; and on the relations and proportions between different kinds of offerings, see pp. 271-279.

## THE MORNING AND EVENING SACRIFICES.

(Verses 1-8.)

These directions for the daily worship of the Israelites suggest—

### I. Our daily need of consecration to God.

This is suggested by the burnt offering, which was designed to express the entire devotion of the offerer himself to the Lord.

1. *This personal consecration was claimed by God.* "My offering, and My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season."

2. *This personal consecration was made by man.* By offering the continual burnt offering, the Israelites symbolically expressed the surrender of themselves to the service of God. Keil and Del.: "In the daily burnt offering the congregation of Israel, as a congregation of Jehovah, was to sanctify its life, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord its God." Every morning we need to devote ourselves afresh to God, to seek His accepting and sanctifying grace, &c. "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1).

### II. Our daily need of atonement with God.

The burnt offering sometimes expressed the idea of expiation as well as consecration. Thus Dr. Outram observes: "As burnt offerings are said in the Scriptures to 'make atonement' (Lev. i. 4; xiv. 20, 31) for those by whom they were offered, hence the Jews consider this class of victims as expiating certain kinds of sins." In the

"continual burnt offering" "the idea of expiation was subordinate to that of consecrating surrender to the Lord," but it was present in the offering, and it suggests our continual need of the atoning efficacy of our Saviour's blood. As our daily imperfections and sins tend to produce estrangement from God, so we daily need the reconciling influences of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (a)

### III. Our daily need of prayer to God.

"Of the daily burnt offerings Abarbanel says: 'The daily burnt offerings were intended as a species of solemn supplications presented to God, that He would be pleased to remember His mercy towards Israel morning and evening, that He would increase their corn, and wine, and oil: as is evident from the meat offering and drink offering which were to accompany them.' . . . After the Jews were deprived of the opportunity of sacrificing, the Sanhedrim decreed, that instead of the stated sacrifices they should offer stated prayers; evidently considering the design of sacrifices and prayers as one and the same."—*Outram*.

Our daily necessities should lead to our daily prayers. Here are some of our daily needs—

1. *Forgiveness of sin.* Sins of omission or commission, sins secret or open, mark our daily life; and cause us to need daily forgiveness. (b)

2. *"Grace to help."* Daily we need direction in difficulties and perplexities, and strength in our weakness; both



bodily and spiritual supplies are a constant necessity with us. (c)

3. *Protection from dangers both to body and to soul.* There are bodily perils visible and invisible, from accident and disease, &c. There are spiritual perils from corrupt social influences, from spiritual adversaries, &c. Hence our need of Divine guardianship. (d)

4. *Renewal of spiritual strength.* As

in the body there are daily waste and exhaustion which have to be repaired by food and rest; so have we need daily of that spiritual renewal which is obtained by the exercise of prayer and other means of grace. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c.

Let us every day offer to God our morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS

(a) See an illustration on this point, by Dr. Parker, on p. 356.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 338 (c).

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 409 (b).

(d) It is a blessed state of heart to wait upon God continually in the spirit of humble, fervent, believing prayer. Satan well knows the value of such a spirit, and therefore tries hard to prevent its exercise. He labours to extinguish this sacred fire, kindled in the soul by the Holy Ghost. He endeavours to disturb the mind, to ride upon the wings of the imagination, and to fill the soul with an endless succession of fleeting images: this daily irruption of the enemy constitutes no small part of the Christian warfare.—*Gleanings*.

(e) This morning and evening sacrifice should direct us how and when to worship God; we must remember Him in the morning and in the evening; He must be in our thoughts first and last; we must begin the day and end the day with Him. Let Him be in our first meditations, when we awake out of sleep. If the heart and thoughts be well settled in the morning, they are like to be better ordered and disposed all the day after. This made the prophet say, "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning," &c. (Psa. v. 8; and xxii. 2; lv. 17; cxix. 55, 62, 164; Dan. vi. 10). Then are the faculties of the soul most fresh and cheerful, then are the senses comforted and refreshed, because of the night's rest, and there-

fore best able to perform any duty to God or man. Again, the morning is a time wherein the world, and the business of this life, have not yet forestalled and possessed our hearts and affections, and therefore we are then the most fit to perform any special or spiritual duty required of us. Lastly, it is the first part of the day, and therefore the most worthy to be consecrated to God, after we have newly tasted His great mercy in the night past, which He might have made everlasting darkness unto us, and never raised us up again. Moreover, as the greatest part neglect this time, so do they also at evening; they forget what blessings they have received, what dangers they have escaped, what temptations they have resisted, what wants they have obtained, what decays they have supplied and repaired, for which they should give Him thanks; and, lastly, what sins they have committed for which He might justly destroy them. They remember not to cast themselves upon His protection; they consider not that He might make their bed their grave, and never bring them to see the light and the sun again.—*W. Attersoll*.

They know little of their own wants and emptiness, who are not much in prayer; and they know little of the greatness and goodness of God, who are not much in praise. The humble Christian hath a heart, in some measure framed to both. He hath within him the best schoolmaster, who teaches him how to pray, and how to praise, and makes him delight in the exercise of them both.—*Gleanings*.

### THE OFFERINGS OF THE SABBATH AND OF THE NEW MOONS; OR SEASONS OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE.

(Verses 9-15.)

In addition to the two lambs, which were to be offered daily for "a continual burnt offering," on the Sabbath-day two lambs, with their meat offering and

their drink offering, were to be offered as "the burnt offering of every Sabbath." And at the beginning of every month two young bullocks, one ram, and seven

lambs, with their meat offerings and drink offerings, were to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering, beside the continual burnt offering.

Moreover, during the Sabbath all temporal and bodily labours were suspended. And at the new moon they rested from their secular occupations (Amos viii. 5, 6); they feasted (1 Sam. xx. 5); they blew the trumpets (chap. x. 10); and heard from the prophets the word of God (2 Kings iv. 23).

What was the reason of these observances? Why were they instituted? We suggest, because that *in addition to the ordinary daily discharge of religious duties, man needs seasons more especially for religious exercises and occupations.* (a) This need will appear if we consider—

**I. The tendency of material and temporal things to engross our attention and regard.**

The things of this life and of this world,—present, visible, and tangible—very generally receive much more than their meed of thought and concern and effort. The temptation to worldliness is perhaps more continuous and more subtle than to any other evil. Hence we need seasons which call our mind and heart to spiritual and eternal things. (b)

**II. The supreme importance of spiritual things.**

Our Lord taught that the soul of man is of more value to him than the whole world. "What is a man profited if he gain?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). The immense worth of the soul may be gathered from its nature, its capacities and powers, and its duration. If it be engrossed in worldly things it is degraded, and will be ruined, lost. It needs to be occupied in the pursuit of truth, holiness, love, beneficence, for in this pursuit it finds its true development and blessedness. And these high things are the real, the permanent, and the priceless things.

Hence the importance of those seasons which call the mind and heart to the contemplation and cultivation of these things.

**III. That spiritual engagements and exercises are indispensable to the healthy existence and activity of the spiritual in man.**

In human nature, until it is renewed by the Holy Spirit, the spiritual elements are not vital and vigorous. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," &c. "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal." Even after a man "is born of the Spirit," he must exercise his spiritual powers, must "walk in the spirit," or their vitality will decline. Activity is an essential condition of spiritual health and progress. The spiritual life needs culture, training, and action. For these reasons we argue the importance of special times and seasons for religious engagements and exercises.

Many of these seasons of special religious observance have passed away, the end for which they were instituted having been accomplished. But the Lord's day, the successor in a certain sense of the Jewish Sabbath, with its duties and privileges, remains as a priceless boon to mankind. Never were its physical rest and its spiritual associations and occupations more needed than in this age. Let us prize the day; let us use it wisely and well. "Every day," says Trapp, "should be a Sabbath to the saints, in regard of ceasing to do evil, learning to do well; but on the seventh-day-Sabbath our devotions should be doubled. The whole Sabbath should be spent in God's service. Psalm xcii., titled, 'A Psalm for the Sabbath,' mentions morning and evening performances (verse 2). Variety of duties may very well take up the whole day with delights. Besides, God gives us six whole days. Now, to sell by one measure and buy by another, is the way to a curse." (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A man who does not pray usually, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray especially. Who would care to live in a miser's house who starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly, and only abounding in it on particular occasions, when ostentation rather than sincerity may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table, sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times; and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God, select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,

The winds that will be howling at all hours

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers—

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

—*William Wordsworth.*

For another illustration on this topic, see p. 426 (c).

(c) I certainly do feel by experience the eternal obligation, because of the eternal necessity, of the Sabbath. The soul withers without it; it thrives in proportion to the fidelity of its observance. Nay, I even believe the stern rigour of the Puritan Sabbath had a grand effect upon the soul. Fancy a man thrown in upon himself, with no permitted music, nor relaxation, nor literature, nor secular conversation—nothing but his Bible, his own soul, and God's silence! What hearts of iron this system must have made. How different from our stuffed-arm-chair religion and "gospel of comfort"! as if to be made comfortable were the great end of religion. I am persuaded, however, that the Sabbath must rest not on an enactment, but on the necessities of human nature. It is necessary, not because it is commanded; but it is commanded because it is necessary. If the Bible says, "Eat the herb of the field," self-sustenance does not become a duty in consequence of the enactment, but the enactment is only a statement of the law of human nature. And so with the Sabbath.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A., "Life and Letters."*

On pp 285, 286, will be found other extracts illustrative of this topic.

THE FIRST SACRAMENT OF THE YEAR.

(Verse 11.)

"And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord."

It is always advantageous to look back upon the Gospel of the Old Testament, as well as upon the Gospel of the New. Good to light our torch at their fire; good amidst the meridian effulgence of the Gospel to look back upon the early twilight of the Law—since all tends to heighten our sense of present privilege and of present obligation. Our text enables us to do this.

We may well apply the language of our text to the first Sacrament of the year.

I. That approach to God through a sacrifice of His own appointing has always been the privilege of His devoted people.

Four of these sacrifices are here described: daily (vers. 3-8); weekly (vers. 9, 10); monthly (vers. 11-15); yearly at Passover (vers. 16-25), and at Pentecost (vers. 26-31). Concerning each observe—

1. *The authority by which it was prescribed.* "Command the children of Israel" (ver. 2). It was not left to option. This is His commandment. Nothing was to be done on Moses's authority: everything was in God's name. So of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth," &c. (Rom. iii. 25). "Him hath God exalted," &c. (Acts v. 31). Whatever is done in God's service must be done by His direction; for God's Church and instituted religion are more precious than all the world beside.



2. *The peculiar interest which God took in them.* "My offering, My bread for My sacrifices, a sweet savour unto Me." The wine was to be "poured unto the Lord." God sets a high value upon all the means and offices which bring the soul near to Himself; and we should do so too.

3. *The typical end and design of all* was by these various means to prepare for the coming of Christ, and to conduct the soul to Him.

"The precious blood of Christ" — precious in the sight of God for its infinite value; precious to the conscience of the convinced sinner for its purifying virtue; precious to the accepted believer for its blessings; precious to all around the throne, who are there alone through its virtue.

II. That there are some seasons in which the mind is aroused to a special contemplation of the great atonement.

"The beginnings of your months." We may fitly apply this to the *beginning of the year*. God marks the flight of time. "God requireth that which is past." And it quite accords with our feeling that the Sabbaths of the year should commence with a service expressly directing us to the Cross of Christ.

1. *Look back upon the sins and shortcomings of the year past*; and let this be a motive to a more full and direct application "to the blood of sprinkling." "In those sacrifices there is a remem-

brance again of sins every year." Look upon the sins of your holy duties, of your religious acts, of your sacramental services. It was not in vain that the sacrifice was doubled on the Sabbath.

2. *Look forward to the duties, trials, and enjoyments of the coming year*; and then see the influence of pardon and acceptance, softening the one, and heightening the other.

III. That in all our religious engagements we must have an immediate respect to the presence and glory of Him whom we approach.

"Ye shall offer a burnt-offering unto the Lord." We have something to do with man; but everything to do with God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Think of this—

1. *To give solemnity to your spirit.* "God is greatly to be feared," &c. (Psa. lxxxix. 7). "Put off thy shoes," &c. (Exod. iii. 5).

2. *To give confidence to your faith.* "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22). "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James i. 6).

3. *To give earnestness and simplicity to your prayers.*

IV. That we are looking forward to a world in which no repetition of these sacrifices and no renewal of these instructions will be required.

. . . . Samuel Thodey.

## THE OFFERINGS OF THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.

(Verses 16-25.)

The institution and observation of the Passover have received full consideration in "*The Hom. Comm.*" on Exod. xii. and xiii. 1-10. The subject has also been briefly treated on pp. 139-143

of this work. It does not seem desirable to take up the subject again. On the significance of the various offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST; OR, MAN'S CELEBRATION OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN HARVEST.

(Verses 26-31.)

This festival was called "the feast of harvest" (Exod. xxiii. 16), "the feast of weeks" (Deut. xvi. 10), and the feast of Pentecost, because it was observed fifty days after the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, 16). The most important passages of Scripture relating to it, in addition to the text, are Lev. xxiii. 15-22, and Deut. xvi. 9-12.

Jewish writers in modern times generally regard this festival as the commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; but we do not find this taught in the Scriptures. Moreover, we shall not attempt here to indicate all the homiletic suggestions of this feast, but simply those connected with our subject, *Man's celebration of the goodness of God in harvest.*

I. The goodness of God to man calls for religious celebration from man.

By Divine command one day is here set apart for joyful acknowledgment of the goodness of God in the grain-harvest. The celebration was to be marked by—

1. *Rest from worldly labours.* "Ye shall do no servile work" (comp. Exod. xii. 16).

2. *Assembling for religious service.* "Ye shall have an holy convocation." In the days of the Apostles, as we learn from Acts ii. 1, 5-11, many Jews came from foreign countries to celebrate this feast.

3. *Rejoicing in the blessing of God upon their labours.* "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God" (Deut. xvi. 10, 11). It was a joyous occasion. "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest." Joyous worship honours God, and is acceptable to Him. God's goodness to us should be gratefully and gladly celebrated by us. (a)

"O bless the Lord, my soul,  
Nor let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in unthankfulness,  
And without praises die."—Watts.  
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II. The goodness of God to man calls for confession of man's sin to God.

At this harvest festival a sin offering was to be made to God. "One kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you." But now that Jesus Christ hath made "His soul an offering for sin," we have no need to bring a "kid to make an atonement." Yet the principles involved in the offering remain.

1. *God's goodness should deepen our impression of our sin.* It should remind us of our unworthiness, and ill-desert. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

2. *The deeper impression of our sin should lead us to exercise increased faith in the Great Sacrifice for sin.* "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14). (b)

III. The goodness of God to man calls for the thanksgiving of man to God.

Pentecost was a festival of thanks for the harvest. Such a festival involved—

1. *Acknowledgment of dependence upon God.* It is He who giveth "us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (c)

2. *Expression of gratitude to God.* The "new meat-offering unto the Lord" (verse 26), the two wave loaves of leavened bread of fine flour (Lev. xxiii. 17), and the "two sheep of a year old for a sacrifice of peace-offerings" (Lev. xxiii. 19), were all designed to express the thankful homage of the people to God. The blessings of God to us should lead us heartily to enquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (d)

IV. The goodness of God to man calls for the consecration of man to God.

"Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord; two young bullocks," &c. (verses 27-29, 31).

The principal meaning of the burnt-offering was the self-dedication of the offerer. Two observations are suggested—

1. *Man's consecration to God should be complete.* The burnt-offering was completely consumed on the altar to the honour of God. So man should dedicate himself unreservedly to God. And the blessings bestowed by God on man should impel him to do so. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1). (e)

2. *Man's complete consecration to God*

is acceptable to Him. "Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord" (see pp. 272, 273).

V. The goodness of God to man calls for goodness from man to his fellowman.

At the harvest festival God called man to liberality and hospitality; to show kindness to the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Lev. xxiii. 22; Deut. xvi. 11). The kindness of God to us should constrain us to show kindness to each other, especially to the poor, &c. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (f)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) An extract illustrative of this point will be found on p. 118 (c).

(b) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(c) This topic is illustrated on p. 276 (b) and (c).

(d) And this topic is illustrated on p. 276 (a).

(e) Self-consecration is illustrated on pp. 93 (a) and (b), 101 (b) and (c), 117 (b), and 344 (c).

(f) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 117 (a), and 343 (a) and (b).

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have directions concerning three great annual religious occasions, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each of these had been previously instituted; and the chief reason of their mention here is for the enumeration of the sacrifices to be offered upon each occasion. The chief treatment of the topics which these occasions suggest will be found in other volumes of *The Preacher's Commentary*, chiefly in that upon *Leviticus*. And as we have already explained the moral significance of the different kinds of sacrifice (see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116), and

considered the relations and proportions between them (see pp. 271-279), the chapter only requires brief treatment from us.

Vers. 1-6. The Feast of Trumpets and its offerings (comp. Lev. xxiii. 24, 25; chap. x. 1-10; and see pp. 156 160).

Vers. 7-11. The great Day of Atonement and its offerings (comp. Lev. xvi.; xxiii. 26 32).

Vers. 12-40. The Feast of Tabernacles and its offerings (comp. Exod. xxiii. 16,—"the Feast of Ingathering;" Lev. xxiii. 34-36, 39 43; Deut. xvi. 13-15; xxxi. 10-13).

### THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS: HOW TO BEGIN A NEW YEAR.

#### (Verses 1-6.)

The Feast of Trumpets is "the feast of the new moon, which fell on the first of Tisri. It differed from the ordinary

festivals of the new moon in several important particulars. It was one of the seven days of Holy Convocation.



Instead of the mere blowing of the trumpets of the Temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices, it was 'a day of blowing of trumpets.' In addition to the daily sacrifices and the eleven victims offered on the first of every month, there were offered a young bullock, a ram, and seven lambs of the first year, with the accustomed meat offerings, and a kid for a sin offering. The regular monthly offering was thus repeated, with the exception of one young bullock." Let us notice—

i. *The time of the celebration.* "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month." The seventh month was called by the Jews in later times Tizri, but in the Old Testament Ethanim (1 Kings viii. 2). Tradition unanimously affirms it to have been the first month of the civil year. Religious celebrations were more numerous in this month than in any of the others. "It formed," says Scott, "a kind of vacation between the harvest and the ensuing seed-time; and these solemnities during that season might intimate, that the ordinances of God are the rational refreshment from the fatigue of business; and that religion does not at all interfere with our true interest even in this world." (a)

ii. *The meaning of the celebration.* "There seems to be no sufficient reason to call in question the common opinion of Jews and Christians, that it was the festival of the New Year's Day of the civil year, the first of Tizri, the month which commenced the Sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Taking this view of its meaning, we regard the paragraph before us as illustrating the manner in which we should begin a New Year.

I. With special attention to religious duties and privileges.

This day was to be marked by rest from ordinary labours, and by a religious assembly. "Ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you." Additional sacrifices were to be offered on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet

savour unto the Lord," &c. (vers. 2-5). And there were to be in addition to "the burnt offering of the month," &c. (ver. 6). It is eminently appropriate to enter upon a new year with religious meditation, and by offering to God the sacrifices of praise and prayer and of beneficence to man. The assembling in "holy convocation" also is as becoming in us, and as helpful to us, as it was to the Israelites. (b)

II. With humble confession of sin and prayer for pardon.

The Israelites were to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for them" (ver. 5). See p. 115. And in entering upon a new year it is wise to seriously review our past lives, to mark where we have rebelled against the holy will of God, how often and sadly we have failed in our duty, &c.; to humbly acknowledge our sin unto God; and to seek forgiveness from Him through our Great Sin-Offering. In this way we should commence the year with our sins forgiven and our souls cleansed by the blood of Christ. (c)

III. With grateful acknowledgment of the Divine mercies.

The Israelites were commanded to offer a "meat-offering of flour mingled with oil," &c. (vers. 3, 4). The meat-offerings, like the peace-offerings, were eucharistic (see pp. 99, 116). How appropriate is it for us at the very beginning of the year to review the mercies of the past! Think of God's mercy in sparing our sinful lives; in forgiving our many aggravated offences; in sustaining us by the constant exercise of His power; in enriching us with countless gifts of His grace, &c. Let us reflect upon His mercy in all this until our heart grows warm with holy fire; and then let us pour out unto Him the offerings of our fervent gratitude. We are not fit to enter upon any year until we have heartily and devoutly blessed God for His great kindness to us in the past. (d)

IV. With complete consecration of ourselves to God.

"Ye shall offer a burnt offering for

a sweet savour unto the Lord," &c. (ver. 2). See pp. 98, 115, 116. An extra burnt offering was required from the Israelites, at the Feast of Trumpets. May we not infer from this that, at the commencement of the year, there are special reasons why we should consecrate ourselves to God, or renew such consecration, if it has already been made? We suggest as such reasons—

1. "*The multitude of His mercies*" to us. We have said that they should be reviewed at this time; and the review should lead to our self-consecration to Him. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (e)

2. *The abridgment of our opportunities.* The past years have borne away with them many opportunities of usefulness, &c. "Much of our time has run to waste." We ought to have

devoted ourselves to God long ago. "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." (f)

3. *The uncertainty of the future.* How many who commenced last year well and strong in body, were called away by death before its close!

"To-morrow, Lord, is Thine,  
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand;  
And if its sun arise and shine,  
It shines by Thy command."

—Doddridge.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

CONCLUSION.

i. *Let the people of God begin the year by renewed and more fervent devotion to Him.*

ii. *Let those who have not hitherto given themselves to Him do so at once, completely, and for ever.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The times of the festivals were evidently ordained in wisdom, so as to interfere as little as possible with the industry of the people. The Passover was held just before the work of harvest commenced, Pentecost at the conclusion of corn-harvest and before vintage, the Feast of Tabernacles after all the fruits of the ground were gathered in. In winter, when travelling was difficult, there were no festivals.—S. Clark, M.A., in *Bibl. Dict.*

(b) We stand in the first Sabbath of the new year. It is a time for review and contemplation. He is a genius at stupidity who does not think now. The old year died in giving birth to this: as the life of Jane Seymour, the English Queen, departed when that of her son, Edward VI., dawned. The old year was a queen, this is a king. The grave of the one and the cradle of the other are side by side.—T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(d) In the dew drops that top every spike of grass, sow the sward with orient pearl, and hang like pendant diamonds, sparkling in the sun from all the leaves of the frost, you see the multitude of His mercies. He crowns the year with His bounty. We have seen other streams dried up by the heat of summer, and frozen by the cold of winter—that of His mercies never. It has flowed on; day by day, night by night, ever flowing; and largely fed of heavenly showers, sometimes overflowing all its banks. To this, and that other one, has

the past brought afflictions? Still, may I not ask, how few our miseries to the number of our mercies; how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings? and even when He smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing of mercy as well as judgment; aye, much more of mercies than judgments? Let us not write the memory of these on water, and of those on the rock.—Thomas Guthrie, D.D.

(e) Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich recollections of His past lovingkindness; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread whereon saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have heard or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold Him fast evermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully; wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head, but do love Him, the blessed Son of God, your ever tender friend.—C. H. Spurgeon.

(f) Whatever the joy and peace of a Christian's death-bed, there will always be a feeling of regret that so little has been done, or rather so little attempted for Christ. And while

His firmament glows with the dawns of eternity, and the melody of angels is just stealing on his ears, and the walls of the bright city bound his horizon—if one wish could detain him in the tabernacle of flesh, oh! it would not be the wish of tarrying with the weeping ones who cluster round his bed; and it would not be the wish of providing for children and superintending their education, or of perfecting some plan for their settlement in life; he knows that there is a Husband for the widow and a Father of the fatherless. The only wish which could put a check on his spirit as the plumes of its wing just feel the free air; is that he might toil a little longer for Christ, and do at least some fraction more of His work before entering into the light of His presence. And what, then, is the reminding him that “now is his salvation nearer,” but the admonishing him that whilst thousands upon thousands are bowing down to the stock and the stone, and vice is enthroned on high places, and an unholy

covenant is made between evil spirits and evil men, to sweep from this globe the name of the believer, there is a swift lapsing of the period during which he may act out his vows of allegiance; that nerve and sinew, time and talent—all must be centred more fixedly than ever in the service of Christ; lest his dying day find him recreant or indolent, and he is summoned to depart ere he have done the little which with all his strenuousness he might possibly effect for the Lord and His kingdom.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

Some of you are spending your last January. You have entered the year, but you will not end it. Somewhere you will shut your eyes in the sleep that knows no waking. Other hands shall plant the Christmas-tree and shake the New Year's greeting. It will be joy to some, sorrow to others. I would leave in your ears five short words of one syllable each—“This year thou shalt die.”—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

## THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT; ITS MORAL SUGGESTIONS.

(Verses 7-11.)

The whole of the ceremonies of this day are described in Lev. xvi. Our business is to attend to the moral suggestions of the paragraph under present consideration.

**I. That it is our duty to set apart some time for serious reflection upon our sins.**

The Israelites were required to set apart this one day in every year for the special remembrance of their sins, and for humiliation and atonement because of them. To seriously reflect upon our sins is a duty we owe—

1. *To ourselves.* Unless our sins be forgiven, they will prove our ruin; unless we sincerely repent of them, they will not be forgiven; unless we recognise and feel them, we cannot repent of them; and unless we consider our life in relation to them, we shall not recognise and feel them, for they are apt to escape our notice, and we are prone to overlook them, or to call them by soft names. Hence the need, &c.

2. *To God.* He calls upon us to consider our ways, to repent of our sins, to turn from them, &c. It is both our duty and interest at times to pause, examine our ways, &c. (a)

**II. That reflection upon our sins should lead to humiliation because of them.**

The day of atonement was sometimes called the “feast of humiliation” amongst the Jews, who upon it were required to humble themselves before God on account of their sins. Self-examination and reflection on our sins will be unproductive of any good result unless they lead to penitential sorrow because of them. Without true repentance the knowledge of sin tendeth to spiritual death rather than life. (b)

**III. That humiliation because of our sins should lead to the mortification of our carnal appetites.**

“Ye shall afflict your souls,” was one of the Divine commands to Israel concerning this day. “The expression to ‘afflict the soul,’ appears to be the old term for fasting; but its meaning evidently embraces, not only abstinence from food, but that penitence and humiliation which give scope and purpose to the outward act of fasting.”—*Speaker's Comm.* Fasting is good religiously only when bodily abstinence is an expression of spiritual penitence.



We do not affirm that fasting is a Christian duty. Even amongst the Jews, on this solemn day, children and sick people were exempt from the obligation. But it is the duty of the Christian to keep carnal passions under the control of spiritual principles, and not to allow bodily appetites to damp the ardour of spiritual aspirations. Thus did St. Paul: "I keep under my body," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 27; Gal. v. 24; Col. iii. 5, 6). (c)

IV. That true penitence leads to gratitude and personal consecration to God.

Special burnt-offerings, expressive of self-consecration, with their meat-offerings, expressive of thankfulness, were to be offered unto the Lord on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt offering," &c. (ver. 8-10). (d)

V. That our penitence, even when it is true in itself and in its expressions, is imperfect, and needs the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice.

The Israelites were commanded to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin-offering; beside the sin-offering of atonement," &c. (ver. 11). Our ap-

proaches to God in penitence and prayer and praise are defective and faulty. "Though we must not repent that we have repented, yet we must repent that we have not repented better."

VI. That the sacrifices of the ceremonial law were unable to take away sin.

The fact that in addition to the sin-offerings of the great ceremonies of this day (Lev. xvi.), another sin-offering was required, most impressively displays the insufficiency of the legal offerings, in themselves, to secure pardon and cleansing from sin for the offerers. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (comp. Heb. x. 1-18). "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (e)

Thus all the suggestions of this paragraph lead us up to our Lord and Saviour. He is the true hope of the penitent soul. He is the only and the all-sufficient Saviour from sin. Seek Him; trust in Him; live to Him.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We should weigh our own spirits. In the remembrance that our hearts are "deceitful above all things," we should, in that duty, go carefully and faithfully to work; not satisfied with a mere surface look; not regarding the word and the action merely, but jealously tracing each, as in the sight of God, to its secret source within; testing that source by the application of Bible criterions; desiring to detect not merely motives that are un-mixedly evil, but every secret adulteration of motives that are in the main good—every alloy—every deteriorating ingredient; "keeping our hearts with all diligence;" and looking forward to that day, when the equal balances of Heaven shall try—both in deed, and in principle and motive—"every man's work of what sort it is."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colours with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant colouring of delight. The glad news of the Gospel can only be printed on wet paper. Have you ever seen clearer shining than that which follows a

shower. Then the sun transforms the rain-drops into gems, the flowers look up with fresher smiles and faces glittering from their refreshing bath, and the birds from among the dripping branches sing with notes more rapturous, because they have paused awhile. So, when the soul has been saturated with the rain of penitence, the clear shining of forgiving love makes the flowers of gladness blossom all around. The steps by which we ascend to the palace of delight are usually moist with tears. Grief for sin is the porch of the House Beautiful, where the guests are full of "the joy of the Lord."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The flesh warreth against the spirit; and the enemy is never so effectually vanquished, as when he is reduced by famine. That hunger is not holiness we are ready to admit; but that it may easily be improved into a glorious mean or instrument of it, universal practice has asserted, and general experience confirmed. The prophet, therefore, does not barely say (Joel ii. 15-18), "proclaim a fast," but "sanctify," that is, hallow or render it holy; make it subservient to moral and religious purposes, by availing yourselves

of that humble, and serious, and recollected frame of mind, which bodily mortification has a natural tendency to produce ; and let it lead you to godly sorrow, heartfelt repentance, and strenuous resolutions of immediate reformation.—*W. Busfield.*

It is true that there is no direct and positive command given by Christ that you should abstain from animal and vegetable food, and the drinking of water ; but lest the flesh-pampering man should be too eager to avail himself of this silence, or make a screen of such a supposed authority, I ought to say, that it is in full and manifold proof that such national self-denial, accompanied with sincere faith and humility, has restrained the hand of the Lord from national judgments ; and moreover, that although the practice of fasting degenerated into the Pharisaism of monkish austerities, it was observed by the Church of Christ in its simplest, purest, and healthiest estate ; and that the more pious and holy of the followers of Jesus have left behind them strong testi-

monies to its value and efficacy.—*T. J. Judkin.*

The Church of God would be far stronger to wrestle with this ungodly age if she were more given to prayer and fasting. There is a mighty efficacy in these two Gospel ordinances. The first links us to heaven, the second separates us from earth. Prayer takes us into the banqueting house of God ; fasting overturns the surfeiting tables of earth. Prayer gives us to feed on the bread of heaven, and fasting delivers the soul from being encumbered with the fulness of bread which perisheth. When Christians shall bring themselves up to the uttermost possibilities of spiritual vigour, then they will be able, by God's Spirit working in them, to cast out devils, which to day, without the prayer and fasting, laugh them to scorn.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Illustrations on this point will be found on pp. 93, 101, 117, 344.

(e) For an illustration on this point see p. 141 (b).

### THE FEAST OF TABERNALES; ITS MEANING AND LESSONS.

(Verses 12-40.)

This institution is introduced here simply for the purpose of giving directions as to the offerings to be presented during the feast ; and nothing is said of its origin, or design, &c. Notice—

i. *The number of the offerings prescribed.* The offerings required upon this occasion were far more numerous than those of any other festival. During the seven days of the feast, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs, and no less than seventy bullocks were sacrificed to the Lord ; being twice as many rams and lambs, and five times as many bullocks, as were offered at the Feast of Passover ; and in addition, on the eighth day were offered one bullock, one ram, and seven lambs.

ii. *The daily distribution of the offerings.* The arrangement as to the number of bullocks to be offered each day is peculiar. On the first day thirteen were to be offered, on the second day twelve, and soon, reducing the number by one each day, till on the seventh day seven were offered. This arrangement was instituted, and the total number was also fixed at seventy, probably to bring into prominence the number

seven, "the holy symbolical covenant number, by way of intimation that the mercies of the harvest accrued by virtue of God's covenant." Bishop Wordsworth, however, suggests "that the gradual evanescence of the law till the time of its absorption in the Gospel is here presignified in the law itself." And from the fact that at the solemnities of the eighth day, which closed the Feast, only one bullock was offered, Matthew Henry makes a similar suggestion : "It is hereby intimated to them that the legal dispensation should wax old, and vanish away at last ; and the multitude of their sacrifices should end in one great sacrifice, infinitely more worthy than all of them."

Having repeatedly spoken of the general significance of these offerings, we proceed to notice briefly—

iii. *The meaning of this Festival.* From the fact that the Feast was celebrated in booths, and is always designated by this word (booths, Heb., *succoth*), Dean Stanley argues "that it did not commemorate the tents of the wilderness, but probably the 'booths' of the first start (*Succoth*, Lev. xxiii,



43; Exod. xiii. 20), the point of transition between the settled and the nomadic life." But this view attaches too great importance to the use of a word, and is not in harmony with the statements of the Scriptures as to the meaning of the Feast. We will endeavour to point out the meanings assigned to it in the Scriptures, and the corresponding lessons which it conveys to us.

I. It was a memorial of their emancipation from Egypt, teaching us that we should cherish the memory of former mercies.

That it was such a memorial appears from Lev. xxiii. 43, "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." "The tents of the wilderness furnished a home of freedom compared with the house of bondage out of which they had been brought." The remembrance of God's gracious dealings with us should be piously fostered by us.

1. *Gratitude urges to this.* To forget the kindnesses bestowed upon us is basely ungrateful.

2. *Reason urges to this.* The recollection of past mercies inspires confidence and hope in present difficulties and needs. To forget them is folly. (a)

II. It was a memorial of their life in the wilderness, reminding us that our present condition is that of strangers and pilgrims.

"And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, &c. That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 40-43). "Now the booth in which the Israelite kept the feast, and the tent which was his ordinary abode in the wilderness, had this in common—they were temporary places of sojourn, they belonged to camp life. The seven days of abode in the booths of the festival was thus a fair symbol of the forty years of abode in tents in the wilderness." It suggests, that "here have we no continuing city." We are

dwellers in tents, not in mansions. Life in this state is brief even at the longest. "Our days upon the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding." (b)

But the Feast was to commemorate the blessings of their life in the desert; blessings such as are given to us in our pilgrimage.

1. *Divine guidance.* "The Lord went before them," &c. "The pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day," &c. (Neh. ix. 19). The same is promised to us (Psa. xxxii. 8; Prov. iii. 6; Isa. lviii. 11). (c)

2. *Divine support.* "Forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness," &c. (Neh. ix. 21). And still He supports His people (Psa. lxxiv. 11; Matt. vi. 25-34). (d)

3. *Divine protection.* The pillar of the cloud and of the fire was a protection. The Lord also made them victorious over their enemies. In our pilgrimage He defends us (John x. 28; Rom. viii. 31, 37-39; 1 Pet. iii. 13). (e)

III. It was a thanksgiving for rest and a settled abode in the Promised Land, suggesting the certainty and blessedness of the rest which remains for the people of God.

This aspect of the Feast is clearly expressed in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "No time in the year could be so suitable for the Israelites to be reminded of the wonderful Providence which had fed and sheltered them in the wilderness, where they had no land to call their own, and where there was neither harvest, nor gathering into barns, nor vintage, as the season in which they offered thanksgiving to Jehovah for the fruits of the ground, and consecrated the crops newly stored in. In this way the transition from nomadic to agricultural life, which took place when the people settled in the Holy Land, must have tended to fulfil the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. From that time the festival called to mind the long and weary wanderings in contrast with the plenty and comfort of settled possession." A compari-



son of Lev. xxiii. 40 with Rev. vii. 9, suggests that to the inspired Seer of Patmos the Feast of Tabernacles was a figure of the perfect rest and joy of heaven. Hengstenberg says that the "palms" of Rev. vii. 9, "are beyond doubt those of the feast of tabernacles." There are at least three points of analogy—

1. *Rest.* With this Feast all labour ceased, and winter, the period of rest, began. In heaven the Christian rests from his wanderings, rests from weary labours, rests from the struggle against sin, &c. (f)

2. *Reward.* At this Feast the Israelite had gathered in the entire harvest, had secured the reward of his labours. In heaven the Christian shall reap a rich reward for all his toils on earth, &c. (g)

3. *Rejoicing.* This was the most joyful of all the Jewish feasts. "They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest." The redeemed in heaven

have "entered into the joy of their Lord." (h)

IV. It was a thanksgiving for the completed harvest, teaching us to receive the precious fruits of the earth as the kind gifts of a bountiful Providence.

"The feast of ingathering, in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Exod. xxiii. 16). "When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days" (Lev. xxiii. 39). "Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine," &c. (Deut. xvi. 13-15). Learn from this, that in the harvest we should gratefully recognise the result of the blessing of God upon our labours. He giveth us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). See sketch on chap. xxviii. 26-31. (i)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) Illustrations on *Life, a Pilgrimage*, will be found on pp. 163, 409.

(c) This point is illustrated on pp. 152, 154, 164.

(d) Illustrations on *the dependence of man and the support of God* appear on pp. 154, 155, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(f) The rest of inaction is but the quiet of a stone, or the stillness of the grave, or the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they find the thing desired; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment; rest in the flow of joyful strength; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified. Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural, and necessary, as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest," not from

their works, but only "from their labours." It would be a labour for them not to work. To hush their music, and to stop their action, would be to them intolerable toil; they would be "weary with forbearing, and could not stay." So they "rest;" yet "they rest not day nor night."—C. Stanford, D.D.

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 420.

(g) An illustration on the *Rewards of heaven* appears on pp. 6, 7.

(h) For an illustration on the *Joys of heaven* see p. 169.

(i) There is a point at which we must give up and stand still, and say, "We can do no more." That is a matter of certainty in your common daily life; and out of it will come such reflections as these: I have nothing that has not upon it God's signature and superscription. I can work; but my work may come to nothing. I may sow my seed, but if He withhold the baptism of the dew and the rain, and the benediction of the sunlight, all my labour will come to nothingness, to mortification and pain! This must have some meaning. There must, in such a combination of circumstances as these, be a purpose which I ought to know, and understand, and work by. If a man once be started on that course of reflection, the probability is, that he who begins as a reverent inquirer, will end as a devout worshipper.—Joseph Parker, D.D.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have regulations as to the force and obligatoriness of vows, with certain cases specified in which they ceased to be binding. Rules for the estimation of things vowed to the Lord had already been laid down in Lev. xxvii. The present chapter appropriately follows the laws regulating the sacrifices, inasmuch as vows frequently related to the offering of sacrifices.

Ver. 1. *Unto the heads of the tribes*, because the questions which are here dealt with would be brought before them for settlement.

Ver. 2. *A vow*. Heb., *neder*, "a positive vow, or promise to give any part of one's property to the Lord."—*Keil and Del.*

*A bond*. Heb., *issar*, "the negative vow, or vow of abstinence."—*Ibid.*

"A vow involved an obligation to do: a bond, an obligation to forbear doing."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*He shall not break his word*. Margin: "profane," i.e., by not fulfilling, or by violating it.

Four cases are specially prescribed for: (1) that of a youthful maiden in her father's house (vers. 3-5); (2) that of a woman betrothed, but not married (vers. 6-8); (3) that of a widow, or divorced woman (ver. 9); (4) that of a married woman in her husband's house (vers. 10-12).

Ver. 6. *And if she had at all an husband, &c.* "Rather, 'And if she shall at all be an husband's, and her vows shall be upon her, or a rash utterance of her lips, wherewith she hath bound her soul.' The 'at all' intimates that the case of a girl betrothed, but not yet actually married, is here contemplated."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Uttered ought, &c.* "Lit., 'the rash utterance of her lips.'"—*Ibid.* "Gossip of her lips, that which is uttered thoughtlessly or without reflection."—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 15. *He shall bear her iniquity*; i.e., "the sin which the wife would have had to bear if she had broken the vow of her own accord."—*Ibid.*

## THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION OF RELIGIOUS VOWS.

## (Verses 1 and 2.)

Notice—

## I. The case supposed.

"If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond."

1. *The vow is made unto God*. He is the only true and proper object of religious vows. There is not a trace in the Bible of vows being made to saints or angels.

2. *The vow binds the soul*. "Swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond." "A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul."

3. *The vow is voluntarily made*. "Vows were not of Divine appointment, but originated with men them-

selves." Spontaneity was of the essence of a vow. The obligations were always voluntarily self-imposed. This is clearly expressed in regard to the offering of Ananias (Acts v. 4). (a)

4. *The thing vowed must be lawful*. No one can rightly bind himself to do an unrighteous thing. Generally vows were solemn promises to consecrate something to God, or to do something in His service and to His honour. But "votive offerings arising from the produce of any impure traffic, were wholly forbidden" (Deut. xxiii. 18). The offering must be pure; the service must be righteous and good.

## II. The danger implied.

"He shall not break His word," &c.

This implies temptation to break the word, or peril of failure in fulfilling the vow. There is in human nature a deep-rooted and deplorable tendency to forget in health the vows which were made in sickness, and to ignore in our security and peace the vows we made in our danger and alarm. (b)

### III. The command given.

1. *That he shall perform his vow.* "He shall not break his word."

2. *That he shall fully perform his vow.* "He shall do according to all

that proceedeth out of his mouth." (c)  
Conclusion.

Appeal to those who have unfulfilled vows resting upon them.

1. *Baptismal vows*, in the case of some of you, are unfulfilled. (d)

2. *Vows made in affliction or danger* by some of you have not been paid.

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it," &c. (Eccles. v. 4, 5). Humbly and earnestly resolve, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now." Resolve and do.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vow is a promise made to God, in the things of God. The obligation of it is, by casuists, deemed to be as great as that of an oath. It is a sacred and solemn bond, wherever a soul binds itself to God in lawful things; and being once bound by it, it is a most heinous evil to violate it. "It is a high piece of dishonesty to fail in what we have promised to men," saith Dr. Hall; "but to disappoint God in our vows is no less than sacrilege. The act is free and voluntary; but if once a just and lawful vow or promise hath passed your lips, you may not be false to God in keeping it." It is with us as to our vows, as it was with Ananias and Sapphira as to their substance: "Whilst it remained," saith Peter, "was it not thine own?" He needed not to sell and give it; but if he will give, he may not reserve; it is death to save only a part; he lies to the Holy Ghost that defalcates from that which he engaged himself to bestow. If thou hast vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, look to it that thou be faithful in thy performance, for He is a great and jealous God, and will not be mocked.—*J. Flavel*.

This topic is illustrated on pp. 92, 93.

(b) In English we say, "The river past, and God forgotten," to express with how mournful a frequency He whose assistance was invoked, it may have been earnestly, in the moment of peril, is remembered no more as soon as by His help the danger has been surmounted. The Spaniards have the proverb too, but it is with them: "The river past, the saint forgotten," the saints being in Spain more prominent objects of invocation than God. And the Italian form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: "The peril passed, the saint mocked."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

Praise should always follow answered prayer. It was thus with one man. He was very ill; a great strong man in his day: yet disease touched him, shrivelled him up, laid him upon a lowly bed, made him pray to the humblest

creature in his house for favours hour after hour. As he lay there in his lowliness and weakness, he said, "If God would raise me up I would be a new man, I would be a devout worshipper in the sanctuary, I would live to His glory." And God gathered him up again; did not break the bruised reed, did not quench the smoking flax, but permitted the man to regain his faculties. And he was not well one month till he became as worldly as he was before his affliction. He prayed as if his heart loved God; and when he got his health back again he was a practical atheist—he was virtually the basest of blasphemers.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 186 (b).

(c) I know of two men who started business with this vow: "We shall give to God one tenth of all our profits." The first year the profits were considerable. The next year there was increase in the profits, and of course increase in the tithe; in a few years the profits became very large indeed, so that the partners said to one another, "Is not a tenth of this rather too much to give away? suppose we say now we shall give a twentieth?" And they gave a twentieth,—and the next year the profits had fallen down; the year after that they fell down again, and the men said to one another, as Christians should say in such a case, "Have not we broken our vow? Have not we robbed God?" And in no spirit of selfish calculation, but with humility of soul, self-reproach, and bitter contrition, they went back to God and told Him how the matter stood, prayed His forgiveness, renewed their vow, and God opened the windows of heaven and came back to them and all the old prosperity.—*Ibid.*

(d) The children of pious parents, who in their infancy were dedicated to God in holy baptism, lie under the solemn vows which were assumed in their behalf. Though your parents had authority to promise for you, it is you that must perform it, for it is you that they obliged. If you think they did you



wrong, you may be out of the covenant when you will, if you will renounce the kingdom of heaven. But it is much wiser to be thankful to God, that your parents were the means of so great a blessing to you; and to do that again more expressly by yourselves, which

they did for you; and openly with thankfulness, to own the covenant in which you are engaged, and live in the performance and in the comforts of it all your days.—*Richard Baxter.*

# THE VOWS OF WOMEN,—THEIR RATIFICATION AND ABROGATION:

(Verses 3-16.)

These verses suggest the following observations—

I. That religious vows are sometimes rashly made.

They are sometimes “the rash utterance of the lips” (ver. 6). Considering their solemn nature and binding force, they ought never to be made without serious consideration.

II. That religious vows made by females under the authority of a father or a husband, and disallowed by them, cease to be binding.

Three examples are given of the abrogation of the vows of women. (1) A father may annul a vow made by his youthful daughter dwelling with him (vers. 3-5). (2) A man betrothed to a maiden, but not married to her, may annul a vow made by her after her betrothal to him (vers. 6-8). (3) A married man may annul a vow made by his wife (vers. 10-12). But in order to annul these vows the father or the husband, as the case may be, must forbid their fulfilment, and that at once. If he kept silence concerning the vow, by so doing he ratified it (vers. 4, 7, 11). And the prohibition of the vow, if it was to be of any force, must be promptly uttered. “If her father disallow her in the day that he heareth,” &c. (ver. 5, and vers. 7, 8, 12). These regulations were wise and equitable; for the daughter or wife might make a vow which would be “prejudicial to the affairs of the family, perplex the provision made for the table if the vow related to meats, or lessen the provision made for his children if the vow would be more expensive than his estate would bear,” or otherwise seriously

interfere with the measures of the father and husband.

III. That vows made by females under such authority and not disallowed, and vows made by females not under such authority, are binding.

If the father did not without delay protest against his young daughter’s vow (vers. 3, 4), or the intending husband against the vow of his betrothed (vers. 6, 7), or the husband against the vow of his wife (vers. 10, 11), such vow remained in full force. And the vows made by widows or divorced wives were as binding as those made by a man (ver. 9). Not being dependent upon a husband or father, such a woman was at liberty to make vows, and having made a vow was bound to fulfil it.

IV. That if a husband improperly annul a vow made by his wife, the guilt of its non-fulfilment will rest upon him.

“But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day,” &c. (vers. 14, 15). In this case the guilt of the unpaid vow would rest upon the husband; and he must either present a trespass-offering for the expiation of his sin (Lev. v. 4-13), or he must bear the punishment due to the sin.

The regulations we have been considering authorise the following *inferences*—

i. *The solemnity of religious vows.* They relate to the soul and to God. They ought not to be lightly made; and when made, they should be performed with scrupulous fidelity.

ii. *The importance and sacredness of parental authority.* Even a vow made

by a maiden to God must be set aside if her father object to it. The Scriptures clearly and repeatedly affirm the authority of parents (Exod. xx. 12; Eph. vi. 1-3). And it is confirmed by the example of our Lord (Luke ii. 51). This authority involves a double obligation—

1. *Parental obligation*—to consider and to promote the welfare of their children, &c. (Gen. xviii. 19; Deut. vi. 7; Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4). (a)

2. *Filial obligation*. (1) To revere their parents (Exod. xx. 12; Mal. i. 6; Eph. vi. 2, 3). (b) (2) To obey their parents. We see from this chapter that "obedience to a father stood higher than a self-imposed religious service."

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." (c) (3) To be grateful to their parents. The ceaseless solicitude and tender care and quenchless love of parents for their children should evoke from them deep and thankful affection (John xix. 26, 27; 1 Tim. v. 4). (d)

iii. *The importance and sacredness of marital authority*. The authority of the husband over the wife, as laid down in this chapter, and in other portions of the scriptures, is very great (1 Cor. xi. 3, 7-9; Eph. v. 22-24; 1 Tim. ii. 12-14; 1 Pet. iii. 1-6).

Let the husband "love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." (e)

### ILLUSTRATIONS

(a) When children are born to you, the most solemn book is opened, so far as you are concerned, that ever is opened, except that which relates to your own soul's fate. The account that begins to be incurred when parents rejoice because a child is born to them, is the most solemn account that ever is incurred aside from one's own individual duty towards God. I do not mean that all the misconduct and evil doings of the child are to come back upon the parent, and that there is to be in the child no free will, so that no individual account can belong to him. For if a parent has cleansed his skirts of his children, the guilt of their sins will rest on their heads, and not on his. But unless the parent can show that the child's misconduct and wreck of eternity are not attributable to any fault of his, the weight of the child's condemnation will be divided—no, it will not be divided, it will rest undivided on the child's head, and undivided on the parent's head. It is a responsibility assumed by every parent, to look after the welfare, temporal and eternal, of his child. If God had sent to him an angel, with a scroll of heavenly writ, saying, "I send to school to you my well-beloved child; take it, teach it, and bring it back to heaven; and let its education be the test of your fidelity"—if God had sent to the parent such a missive, his responsibility would not be greater or more real than that which is laid upon us when we undertake to bring up children. They are not simply playthings, although they do make playthings. They are not mere little pleasure-bells, although no bells ever ring so sweetly. They are not instruments of music, and pictures, and flowers of dear delight in our household, that we may enjoy them, and that they may enjoy themselves. They are

not frolicsome kittens and singing birds for our pleasure and their own. They are God's immortals. They are sent forth to make an earthly pilgrimage, and you are their schoolmasters and pilots. It is a solemn thing to have such a charge put into your hands.—*H. W. Beecher.*

For additional illustrations on *Parental duties and responsibilities*, see pp. 33, 46, 47.

(b) There are some children who are almost ashamed to own their parents because they are poor or in a low station of life. We will therefore give an example of the contrary, as displayed by the Dean of Canterbury, afterwards Archbishop Tillotson. His father, who was a plain Yorkshireman, perhaps something like those we now call "Friends," approached the house where his son resided, and enquired whether "John Tillotson was at home." The servant, indignant at what he thought his insolence, drove him from the door; but the Dean, who was within, hearing the voice of his father, instead of embracing the opportunity afforded him of going out and bringing in his father in a more private manner, came running out, exclaiming in the presence of his astonished servants, "It is my beloved father!" and falling down on his knees, asked for his blessing.—*Dict. of Illust.*

(c) During Havelock's stay in England, a gentleman went one evening to the house of the colonel, in compliance with an invitation. In the course of conversation, Mrs. Havelock turned suddenly round to her husband, and said, "My dear, where is Harry?" referring to her son, whom she had not seen during the whole afternoon. The colonel started to his feet. "Well, poor fellow! he's standing on London Bridge, and in this cold too! I told him to wait for me there at twelve o'clock to



day; and, in the pressure of business, I quite forgot the appointment." It was now about seven o'clock in the evening. The colonel ordered a cab to be called; and, as he went forth to deliver his son from his watch on London Bridge, he turned to excuse himself from his visitor, saying, "You see, sir, that is the discipline of a soldier's family." In the course of an hour, he returned with poor Harry, who seemed to have passed through the afternoon's experience with the greatest good humour.—*Ibid.*

(d) An old schoolmaster said one day to a clergyman who came to examine his school, "I believe the children know the cat-chism word for word." "But do they understand it? that is the question," said the clergyman. The schoolmaster only bowed respectfully, and the examination began. A little boy had repeated the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" and he was desired to explain it. Instead of trying to do so, the little fellow with his face covered with blushes, said, almost in a whisper, "Yesterday, sir, I showed some strange gentlemen over the mountain. The sharp stones cut my feet; and the gentlemen saw them bleeding, and they gave me some money to buy me shoes. I gave it to my mother, for she had no shoes either; and I thought I could go barefoot better than she." The clergyman then looked very much pleased; and the old schoolmaster only quietly remarked, "God gives us His grace and His blessing."—*Christian Treasury.*

(e) Sometimes we have seen a model marriage, founded in pure love and cemented in mutual esteem. Therein the husband acts as a tender head, and the wife, as a true spouse, realises the model marriage relation. She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, his affection: to her he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all in all, her heart's love belongs to him and to him only. She finds sweetest content and solace in his company, his fellowship, his fondness; he is her little world, her paradise, her choice treasure. To please him she would gladly lay aside her own pleasure to find it doubled in gratifying him. She is

glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no name for herself, his honour is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She would defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak for him. The domestic circle is her kingdom; that she may there create happiness and comfort is her life-work, and his smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress she thinks of him, without constraint she consults his taste, and thinks nothing beautiful that is obnoxious to his eye. A tear from his eye because of any unkindness on her part, would grievously torment her. She asks not how her behaviour may please a stranger, or how another's judgment may be satisfied with her behaviour; let her beloved be content and she is glad. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand, but she believes in them all, and anything that she can do to promote them she delights to perform. He lavishes love on her, and she on him. Their object in life is common. There are points where their affections so intimately unite that none could tell which is first and which is second. To see their children growing up in health and strength, to see them holding posts of usefulness and honour, is their mutual concern; in this and other matters they are fully one. Their wishes blend, their hearts are indivisible. By degrees they come very much to think the same thoughts. Intimate association creates uniformity; we have known this to become so complete that at the same moment the same utterance has leaped to both their lips. Happy woman and happy man! If heaven be found on earth, they have it! At last the two are so welded, so engrafted on one stem, that their old age presents a lovely attachment, a common sympathy, by which its infirmities are greatly alleviated, and its burdens are transformed into fresh bonds of love. So happy a union of will, sentiment, thought, and heart exists between them, that the two streams of their life have washed away the dividing bank, and run on as one broad current of united existence till their common joy falls into the main ocean of felicity.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Moses had already received command to smite the Midianites (chap. xxv. 16-18); and in this chapter we have the order given to him to execute that command, and the narrative of its execution.

Verse 2. *Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, i.e., for the injury*

which the Midianites had done to the Israelites in seducing them to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Peor.

*Afterward shall thou be gathered unto thy people.* See p. 379.

Verse 3. *Avenge the Lord of Midian, because their seduction of the*



Israelites had violated the Divine honour.

Verse 4. *Of every tribe a thousand.* Margin: "A thousand of a tribe, a thousand of a tribe."

Verse 5. *So there were delivered.* Or, so there were "counted off."—*Fuerst.* Dr. Howard: "And they numbered out."

Verse 6. *Phinehas.* He had manifested his fitness for a prominent position in this enterprise by his zeal for God and against the idolators (chap. xxv. 6-13).

*With the holy instruments, and the trumpets.* "Or rather, 'with the holy instruments, to wit, the trumpets,' for the trumpets themselves seem to be the instruments intended."—*Speaker's Comm.* Comp. chap. x. 9.

Verse 8. *And they slew, &c.* "Render thus: 'And the kings of Midian they put to death, beside those that fell in the battle; namely,' &c."—*Ibid.* Comp. Josh. xiii. 21.

Verse 10. *Goodly castles.* Rather, "encampments or hamlets."—*Fuerst.* "Hamlets" seems preferable. "Tent-villages."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 11. *The spoil, i.e., booty in goods* such as are mentioned in vers. 22 and 50.

*The prey, i.e., the captives and the cattle seized as booty.*

Verse 16. *Caused. . . . to commit trespass.* Keil and Del.: "'They have become to the Israelites to work unfaithfulness towards Jehovah,' i.e., they have induced them to commit an act of unfaithfulness towards Jehovah. The word *מָסַר*, which only occurs in this chapter, viz., in vers. 5 and 16, appears to be used in the sense of giving, delivering, and then, like *עָשָׂה*, doing, making, effecting."

Verse 17. *Kill every male, &c.* "The object of the command to put all the male children to death, was to exterminate the whole nation, as it could not be perpetuated in the women. Of the female sex, all were to be put to death who had known the lying with a man, and therefore might possibly have been engaged in the licentious worship of Peor (chap. xxv. 2), to preserve the congregation from all contamination from that abominable idolatry."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19 (comp. chap. xix. 11, 12).

Verse 22. *Brass.* Rather, *copper*, "as the mixture of copper and zinc, now known as brass, was not known to the ancients."—*Alford.*

Verse 23. *Purified with the water of separation* (comp. chap. xix. 9, 17-19).

Verse 49. *There lacketh not one man of us.* A noteworthy proof of the presence and protection of God.

Verse 50. *Chains.* Or "arm bands, arm ornaments, 2 Sam. i. 10."—*Fuerst.*

*Rings.* "Signet rings."—*Ibid.*

*Tablets.* "Buckles, bracelets."—*Ibid.* Others say they were ornaments "worn suspended from the neck."

*To make an atonement.* "An acknowledgment of having received undeserved mercies. These, if acknowledged, would have entailed guilt on the soul."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.* "In value about £20,000."—*Speaker's Comm.* "If we take the golden shekel at 10 thalers (30 shillings), the value of the ornaments taken by the officers under Moses would be about 167,500 thalers (£25,125)."—*Keil and Del.*

## THE VENGEANCE OF JEHOVAH ON MIDIAN.

(Verses 1-12.)

This paragraph suggests the following observations—

I. That in the administration of

the Divine government the punishment of sin is certain.

The Israelites were severely pun-

ished for the sins which they committed with the Midianites, and now the Midianites are to receive their punishment. Notice—

1. *The sin which the Midianites had committed.* Their women had seduced the Israelites to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Poor (see p. 487).

2. *The Author of the punishment of the Midianites.* The Lord Himself commanded it; and it seems to us that He prescribed the arrangements for its execution, and empowered and protected its executioners. (a)

3. *The executioners of the punishment.* The Israelites were called upon to avenge the gross wrongs which the Midianites had done them as the people of Jehovah. It was eminently fitting that as Israelitish men had been corrupted by the Midianites, Israelitish men should execute the judgment of God upon them. (b)

4. *The severity of the punishment.* (1) It fell upon an immense number. "They slew all the males." This does "not mean that they exterminated all the men of the nation, but only that they slew all who withstood them; for the nation itself consisted in considerable strength, and was able in a few generations to bring the Israelites themselves under subjection." And, in addition, vast numbers were taken captives, many of whom were afterwards slain. (2) It fell upon persons of every rank. "The kings of Midian they put to death, besides those that fell in the battle; namely, Evi," &c. Against the punishments of God, princes and potentates are as defenceless as plebeians and paupers. "There is no respect of persons with God." "He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." (3) It involved the destruction of their towns and villages, and the loss of their property. "The children of Israel took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt," &c. (vers. 9-11). (c)

In the righteous government of God

sin ever brings forth sorrow, tribulation follows transgression. (d)

II. That God can work by many, or by few, in the execution of His purposes.

Out of an army of more than six hundred thousand (chap. xxvii. 51), only twelve thousand men were sent to this war. The number was probably small, as compared also with the forces which they had to encounter. The accomplishment of the purpose of God by this small force was fitted to answer three ends—

1. *To teach them that this expedition was, in a special manner, the Lord's.* He was concerned in the punishment of the sin of Midian, and in the vindication of His honour, &c.

2. *To teach them that He can effect His purposes "by many or by few"* (1 Sam. xiv. 6; and Judg. vii.). (e)

3. *To check any temptation or tendency to self-glorification on the part of the soldiers.* (f)

III. That God honours the holy zeal of His servants by employing them as leaders in the execution of His purposes.

"Moses sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, even the trumpets to blow in his hand." Phinehas went with the army as the priest of the Lord, to encourage them in fighting, because the war was a holy one against the enemies of the Lord their God (comp. chap. x. 9). His appointment to this duty, on this occasion, may be viewed—

1. *As the employment of an agent of approved fitness for his duty.* Phinehas had shown his fitness for this appointment (chap. xxv.). In the accomplishment of His purposes, God employs suitable agents and instruments. (g)

2. *As the reward of distinguished service.* He who is brave and faithful in one duty shall be called to other and more arduous duties (comp. Matt. xxv. 21).

IV. That God enriches His people with the spoils of their enemies.

"And they took all the spoil, and all the prey," &c. (vers. 11, 12).



Those who have assailed the Church by persecution have defeated themselves, and confirmed and extended the Church. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." And they who have attacked it with capacious criticism and bitter controversy, have contributed to the strength of its defences and the extension of its

triumphs. They have aroused the scholars and the thinkers of the Church to the marshalling of the evidences of our religion, and to the vindication of its claims. God frustrates the designs of the enemies of His cause, and overrules them for the accomplishment of His purposes and the extension of His kingdom. (h)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on the *justifiableness of war*, see pp. 19, 20.

(b) For illustrations on the *Executioners of Divine judgments*, see pp. 252, 312.

(c) Among the causes which justify war, none is more unanimously asserted by political writers, than an attempt on the part of one community against the civil institutions, and so against the integrity and internal peace, of another. The Hebrews had therefore an undoubted right, even apart from the Divine command, to attack the people of Midian, who had treacherously endeavoured to withdraw them from their allegiance, and thus to unsettle the foundations of all their union, prosperity, and peace, and prepare them to become an easy conquest to their own arms.

Now, if it be right to wage war at all, it is not only right to wage it in such a manner as shall accomplish its object, but it would be wrong to wage it in any other manner. War is, in its very nature, the infliction of suffering in order to an ulterior good; and the infliction of any degree of suffering is unjustifiable, unless so far as it may lead to this result. If, therefore, in the prosecution of a war, the measures adopted are of such lenity as to be insufficient to produce the end in view, namely, protection for the present and security for the future, the mitigated evil then becomes uncompensated by any ulterior good. It is then a causeless and unjustifiable evil; it is not mercy, but cruelty and crime. This principle is clear, and is theoretically acknowledged; yet when any application of it however wise and just, tends to severities which we are not accustomed to regard as belonging to the necessities of the case, our feelings are naturally shocked. Yet the principle continues to operate, and is acknowledged in all our warfare, although, with the progress of civilisation, it has come to be understood in civilised communities, that inflictions formerly resorted to shall be forborne. But in their conflicts with barbarous nations, who have no such understanding, they are accustomed to adopt harsher measures; and this for the simple and sound reason, that the object would not otherwise be gained, and that if they were to allow a war to be to their adversaries a less evil than these adversaries were in the habit of expect-

ing it to prove, such a self-prostrating lenity is ascribed to weakness, and not to the pride of conscious strength. Severity, in short, is beneficent, when it is suited to guard against the necessity of its own repetition; and how much or how little is adequate to that end, is a question to be determined by reference to some existing state of society. The Israelites conducted their warfares on the principles generally recognised in their time; and to have done so on any other or milder principle, against such enemies as they had to contend with, would have been ruinous and suicidal. Thus only could it be effectual; and war not intended to be effectual should not be waged at all. It is confidently hoped and believed, that the time is coming, is near at hand, when war, as now conducted by ourselves—when any war—will be looked back upon with the same feelings of disgust and horror, as those with which we now regard the conflicts of the nations beyond the Mediterranean three-and-thirty centuries ago.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(d) For illustrations on the *Certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 253, 312, 318, 374.

(e) The straw cannot beat the mountain into flying dust. The hand of man cannot crumble the great gigantic bulwarks behind which error has entrenched itself. You are quite right. But God hath chosen the weak things to throw down the mighty. It is not the straw that does it; it is the hand that wields it. Shakespeare dips his pen into the ink, and writes *Hamlet*. I take up the same pen, dip into the same ink, but I can't write *Hamlet*. It is not the pen that does it; it is the writer. It is not the little instrumentality; it is the God who is able to do, and who has done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

The weakness of the instrument is a small matter when the hand is infinitely strong. You and I have said, "We are men full of infirmities. What can we do? We have but few talents, we have no social position, we have not the opportunities of doing good that some have, and, therefore, we are discouraged." But the Lord knows thy heart, my brother. If thou wert meaner in the scale of society; if thou hadst not even one, but only half a



talent; if thou wert less able to speak than thou art, and wert a man slow of speech like Moses; yet if God be behind thee, dost thou not know that every weakness of thine is according to His own intent and purport, and is as much designed as the strength of the strongest to illustrate the majesty of His might? Oh, didst thou believe, thy weakness would be thy glory; thou wouldst rejoice even to be nothing, that in this the great All-in-all might the more resplendently display Himself.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(*f*) This point is illustrated on p. 276.

(*g*) The opinion is very prevalent, and the impression still more so—though neither so prevalent as they used to be—that God is in the habit of employing unlikely instruments; that, for the purpose of revealing His all-sufficiency and bringing honour to Himself, He delights to contrast results with their secondary causes, and to disappoint the calculations founded on the supposed efficiency of human agents. To hear some men talk, you might conclude that God cannot be

properly said to employ instruments at all, that in nature, and still more in providence, and most of all in grace, they are not so much instruments that He employs as obstacles, not so much things having a tendency and fitness to accomplish His designs, as things altogether unsuitable and inappropriate. Now, this belief or feeling is entirely erroneous, and woefully mischievous. It is dishonouring to God, and injurious to men. Such is not God's custom, such is not even God's exceptional act. We rejoice in the thought that, in a sense, God does all things, that there is no power but of God, that even physical instruments and moral agents derive all their force from Him, owing to Him their existence and their efficiency; but we also hold fast by the conviction that power and wisdom go together; that God acts by laws and delights to honour them, and that in all His operations He pays profound respect to the inherent relevancy of things.—*A. J. Morris.*

(*h*) An illustration on this point appears on p. 472.

### THE DOOM OF THE DOUBLE-HEARTED.

(Verse 8.)

"Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

Balaam had taken the field against Israel,—against a people whom he had pronounced blessed,—whom he had pronounced invincible both by earth and hell. Yes; Balaam "the son of Beor,"—he, and not another of the name,—*he* rushes on the bosses of the Almighty's buckler; *he* defies Israel and Israel's God!

But he fails. He would fain have cursed Israel; but he could not. He counselled Moab to seduce Israel by temptation, and his device succeeded too well. He now fetches the last stroke. In vain. He perishes ignobly. He is slain with the sword which he had defied.

Such is the end of the backslider; of one who knew the truth but did it not; who once said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It was certainly not the end he prayed for; yet it was the end to which his whole life had been tending. He reaped what he sowed, and in him "God was not mocked."

He died as he lived, in fellowship

with Moab, yet in heart persuaded that Israel was the beloved of the Lord, and that Jehovah was God. His life had been with Midian, and so was his death.

His grave is with the unclean. He passes from earth with none to soothe his death-bed and close his eyes; none to lament for him or build his monument. Sad end of a life of halting and indecision, and resistance of the Spirit, and braving of conscience, and rejection of light, and wretched covetousness. He "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and verily he had his reward.

Let us see what he wanted and how he failed; how ambitious he was, yet what a life of utter failure and disappointment was his. He would fain have risen, but he sunk. He would fain have been rich, but he lost everything. What a wasted life! Yet the life of one who knew better things, but did them not; who knew that the world was vanity, yet followed it; who knew that Israel's portion was the best, yet chose that of Moab; who knew the true God and the true Messiah, but preferred the idolatries of Israel's enemies. He saw Him "from the top

of the rocks," but that was all. He got a passing glimpse of the cross, but no more. It was all he saw of the way of life, ere he plunged into death and woe.

I. He wanted to serve two masters.

These were the same as the Lord in after days designated God and mammon. He wanted not to offend either; to please both. He was like Issachar crouching between two burdens. But it would not do. He failed. Such is the certain failure of all who make the like attempt. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." He loved the one master, mammon; and he dreaded the other; but would fain do the will of both. He could not afford to lose the favour of either. Miserable life! More miserable death! The life and death of one whose whole career was one long attempt to do the bidding both of God and the devil.

II. He wanted to earn two kinds of wages.

The wages of righteousness and the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. ii. 15), were both in his eyes; he would fain have the pay both of God and of the devil. He was unwilling to do or say anything which would deprive him of either. He was as cautious and cunning as he was covetous. He would not work without wages; and he would work for a hundred masters if they would only pay him well. How like many so-called "religious" men amongst ourselves.

III. He wanted to do two opposite things at the same time.

He wished both to bless and to curse. He was willing to do either according as it might serve his interests. The only question with him was, "Would it pay?" If the blessing would pay, he would take it; if the curse would pay, he would take it; if both would pay, he would take them both. Blessing and cursing were both alike to him; confessing and denying the true God, worshipping Baal or Jehovah, it mattered not, if by "this craft he could have his wealth." So with many among us. If Sabbath-keeping will pay, they

will keep the Sabbath; if Sabbath-breaking will pay, they will break the Sabbath. True Balaams—without principle, without faith, and without fear.

IV. He wanted two kinds of friendship.

He would fain be friends with every body. Perhaps he was timid; of those whom Scripture calls fearful (Rev. xxi. 8); perhaps, also, he was ambitious, and sought great things for himself wherever these could be obtained (Jer. xlv. 5); certainly he had before him "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," and the love of man's approbation which brings no less a snare; he dreaded Israel's God, of whom he knew much, but he dreaded also Moab's gods, though whether he really believed in them we know not. Made up of these contradictions, and acting not by faith but unbelief, he tried to secure the friendship of all whom he counted great, whether in heaven or on earth. He shut his eyes not only to the sin but to the impossibility of such a course; he saw not that the friendship of the world is the enemy of God, and that whosoever will be the friend of the world must be the enemy of God.

V. He wanted to have two religions.

He saw religion to be a paying concern, a profitable trade, and he was willing to accept it from anybody or everybody, to adopt it from any quarter if it would but raise him in the world, and make his fortune. Perhaps he thought all religions equally right or equally wrong, equally true or equally false. He would rather not offend any god if he could help it. He would make concessions to "religious prejudices" of any kind if the prejudiced people will only help him on. . . . Two gods and two religions he wanted to have.

But this double service, and double friendship, and double religion, would not do. He would make nothing by them. They profited him nothing either in this life or that to come. His end was with the ungodly, his portion with the enemies of Israel. And his

soul, where could it be? Not with Israel's God, or Israel's Christ, or in Israel's heaven. He reaped what he sowed.

He was a good specimen of multitudes in these last days. An educated and intelligent man, shrewd and quick-seeing, of respectable character; high in favour with the rich and great, a religious man, too, after a fashion, not unsound in creed so far, for he acknowledges Jehovah as the true God. But he is fond of the world, fond of money, fond of preferment: one that would not let religion stand in the way of his advancement; who could pocket all scruples if he could pocket a little gold along with them; hollow of heart, but with a fair outside. He would rather not risk offending God, but yet he would not like to lose Balak's rewards and honours. He would rather not take up his cross, nor deny himself, nor forsake all for his God.

So is it with multitudes amongst us. They want as much religion as will save them from hell; not an atom more. The world is their real god; gold is their idol; it is in mammon's temple that they worship. Love God

with all their heart! They don't so much as understand the meaning of such a thing. Sacrifice riches, place, honour, friends, to Christ! They scoff at the thing as madness.

Oh, be on the side of God, out and out. . . . You may follow Christ in some things, but if not in all, what is your following worth? This world or the world to come, that is the alternative; not this world *and* the world to come. Christ *all* or *nothing*. No middle ground; no half-discipleship; no compromise. The new birth, or no religion at all.

Look to thy latter end. *What* is it to be? *Where* is it to be? *With whom* is it to be? Anticipate thy eternity. Is it to be darkness or light, shame or glory?

Do not sear your conscience by praying Balaam's prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous." What will that avail you? It is the *life* of the righteous that God is calling you to lead; and He will take care of your death. Decide, halt not; else surely yours will be a wretched life, and a still more wretched death.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*  
Abridged from "*Light and Truth*."

## THE RETURN OF THE VICTORIOUS ARMY.

(Verses 13-24.)

Let us notice—

I. The reception of the returning warriors.

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp." Thus the chief men of the nation honour the brave men who had been avenging the Israelites and Jehovah upon the Midianites.

Learn, that services rendered to the public should be heartily recognized by the public.

II. The remonstrance with the returning warriors.

"And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, the captains over thousands," &c. (vers. 14-16). The

women had been the chief offenders in the matter which the army had been sent to avenge; they had seduced the men of Israel into sin; therefore in the execution of their commission (ver. 3) the soldiers should have slain them. "The sword of war," says Scott, "should spare women and children, as incapable of resisting; but the sword of justice knows no distinction, except that of guilty or not guilty, and more or less guilty. This war was the execution of a righteous sentence upon a *guilty* nation, in which the women were the principal criminals; and perhaps particular instructions had been given on this head: therefore Moses was angry when he found the women had been spared."



Learn, *the sinfulness of omissions of duty or of the merely partial performance of duty.* (a)

III. The retribution to the Midianitish women.

"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man," &c. (vers. 17, 18). This may be viewed—

1. *As a punishment.* The law concerning adultery was, "the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xx. 10). It is almost absolutely certain that many of these women had committed adultery with the Israelites in the matter of Baal-Peor. The Lord had himself put to death by the plague the Israelites who thus sinned; and now as part of His vengeance upon Midian the women who sinned are to be put to death. The tempted having been punished, it would not have been right for the tempters to escape. And since it was impossible, except by miracle, to separate the guilty from the innocent, all the women were slain (comp. 1 Pet. iv. 17).

2. *As a precaution.* The women who had been engaged in the abominable worship of Baal-peor, would, probably, had they been spared, have seduced the Israelites again into sin; and so their death may have appeared necessary for securing the purity and security of Israel. And the boys, on growing into manhood, would probably have conspired to avenge the slaughter of their parents upon Israel, and so they were

put to death. Moreover, as an example of Divine retribution, it was thus rendered more impressive, "warning parents not to imitate the guilt of the Midianites, lest they should involve their beloved offspring in destruction." (b)

Learn, *that it is our duty to avoid every occasion of temptation to sin* (comp. Matt. v. 29, 30). (c)

IV. The purification of the returning-warriors, their captives, and their spoils.

"And do ye abide without the camp seven days," &c. (vers. 19-23). The camp of Israel was regarded as holy because of the presence of the Lord God there; and the soldiers having become ceremonially unclean by their contact with the slain, could not enter therein until they were purified (comp. chap. v. 1-4; xix. 11-20). And the captives having by their captivity become "to some extent a constituent part of the Israelitish people," needed purification also, especially as they had practised abominable idolatry. And the spoil, as being taken from a heathen people, would need purification, before it could be admitted into the camp, and appropriated to the use of the people of God.

Learn, *that it is the solemn duty of the Church of God to maintain moral purity within its borders.* "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 16—vii. 1). (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 278, 279.

(b) A more difficult point is the command of Moses, that the adult females and the male children among the prisoners should be put to death. Pained as we are by the recital of such horrors, and glad as we feel that such usages have passed away from the practices of war, close examination will enable us to see that the principles which have been laid down (see p. 538), supply an adequate excuse for a course which Moses himself must have regarded as distressing. His course was designed to act in *terrorem*, with a view to fu-

ture security. It is clear that he had no satisfaction in the task. On the contrary, he appears to have been strongly excited when he beheld the array of prisoners, and to have uttered a rebuke which shows that he would far rather that whatever severity needed to be exercised should have been finished in the furious haste of onset, than that it should thus be left for execution in cold blood. As it was, however, the prisoners were upon his hands, and he had to dispose of them as the recent hazards and the present condition of the state demanded, in an age when the necessities of the world's government involved the use of

a much harsher instrumentality than is now requisite. Taking these considerations with us, it may be asked, What was to be done with these prisoners? Should they be sent home unharmed, or should they be welcomed on an equal footing to the hospitality of Israel? Then if the views already stated (p. 538) are sound, the war ought not to have been undertaken. This follows, even without insisting upon the circumstance, that had the latter alternative been adopted, the youthful sons of the Midianitish warriors would soon have grown up to be a sword in the bosom of the still feeble state, and possibly to compel the hazards and hardships of another conflict. Then, with regard to the adult females, it is to be considered that it was their wicked instrumentality which had led Israel to sin, and had given occasion to the recent war; and, on the other hand, the danger to be apprehended from them, if they were allowed again to try their seductive arts upon the Israelites, had just been proved to be such as the infant state would by no means tolerate.

Keeping in view, therefore, the time and country in which Moses lived, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded, it will be a bold thing for anyone to say, that as a man entrusted with the welfare of a nation he acted wrongly. That he acted only from a strong sense of duty, every one who has studied his character must know; and who among us, in these

altered times, is better able than he was to judge of what his duty exacted? But if in this case he did err, in judging that the stern obligations of political duty allowed him to show no pity on more than one class of his prisoners, let him alone bear the blame of the deed. He appears to have acted on his own judgment, and does not, as usual, adduce the command of the Lord for the course which was taken.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(c) A man who has been corrupted by the fire of intoxication, says, "I cannot resist the cup when I sit with my companions and it is being passed over my shoulder; I have to drink; I am seized as with an afflatus of infernal fire, and I cannot help drinking." It may be that, when you bring yourself where liquor is dispensed, you cannot help drinking; but you can avoid going there. Once having tried it and found that you could not resist the temptation, the next time you are guilty, not for not resisting it, but for going where the cup that is irresistible to you is handed about; and you are just as guilty as though you could resist the temptation and did not, only the guilt takes hold one step further back. Men are responsible for their volitions, and for those conditions which produce volitions—and this is the opinion of men generally.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 78, 94.

### THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM.

(Verse 16.)

How shall we characterise the conduct of Balaam in this transaction? Consider—

#### I. The measure of his criminality.

To do this we must form some estimate of his knowledge of what was right for him to do towards Israel. He knew *everything* concerning Israel, and their relation to God. His sin was thus committed knowingly, consciously, wilfully. He set himself to do wickedly.

#### II. His motives in this course.

The meanest. He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

III. The baseness of the method he adopted to accomplish his design.

God had revealed to him, in prophetic insight, the secret of Israel's greatness and strength. And Balaam used that very inspiration to injure, fatally, God's own chosen people.—*W. Roberts.* Quoted in *The Biblical Museum.*

### THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOILS OF THE WAR.

(Verses 25-47.)

The Lord God gave directions to Moses as to how the booty taken from the vanquished Midianites should be

divided. This would tend to prevent dissatisfaction and complaint, &c.  
Notice—

**I.** In this distribution the claims of all classes of the community were recognised.

The soldiers who had fought the battle and seized the booty did not retain the whole of it. They had been chosen out of the whole congregation to conduct the war for the congregation, which had therefore a just claim to share in the spoils. They "that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and all the congregation," the priests, and the Levites, all received a share.

Learn, *that public servants should seek to benefit the entire community.* (a)

**II.** In this distribution the claims of each class were considered and equitably dealt with.

Though all classes shared in the booty, all classes did not have equal portions. And this was just. The soldiers who had returned from the war, though only one fiftieth of the entire congregation, received for their share as much as all their brethren who had remained at home. And it was right that, inasmuch as they had borne the hardships and hazards of the war, they should be rewarded for their services. Again, the portion of the Levites was ten times as much as that

of the priests, as they were vastly more numerous. But the portion of each individual among the priests must have been considerably greater than that of each individual among the Levites, as was fitting on account of the more exalted and responsible character of their office. The proportion allotted to each class seems to have been conspicuously just and fair.

Learn, *that God requires us to act equitably in all our dealings.*

**III.** In this distribution the claims of the Lord were practically acknowledged.

The portions which were given by the warriors to the priests, and by the congregation to the Levites, were "a tribute unto the Lord"—"a heave offering of the Lord." Surely this was right and comely. He had given them the victory over the Midianites; and they would have been guilty of injustice and ingratitude if they had not presented a thank-offering to Him.

Learn, *that of all our gains a portion should be devoted to the Lord God.* "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (comp. Deut. viii. 10-18). (c)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All personal and private interests must be sacrificed to the call of duty. In the higher walks of benevolent activity, there is no such thing as a life of inglorious ease. . . .

This sublime principle of self-annihilation is conspicuous in the Christian system. Compared with the one act of the Saviour's consecration and surrender, the flame of a thousand worlds would have gone out in cold ashes. Having loved us even unto death, this was the last possible point to which His self-devotion could reach, and never was there such a perfect oblivion of self as in His one offering on the Cross. Drinking into this spirit, His disciples forsook all and followed Him. Martyrs and confessors stand before us magnanimous in the spirit of a self-forgetting love. If the Greeks provided that their citizens might be brave in mind, and strong in body, Christianity must ever be looked upon as the religion of heroism. We must be prepared to give up whatever comes between the call of duty and our own individual interest. We

know little of the power of the Cross, if it has not crucified us to the world, and crucified the world to us. In proportion as we are filled with the power of the Cross, do we become superior to the littleness and the selfishness of our nature, and devote ourselves to the cause of universal good.—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) Justice is the greatest interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. Wherever her temple stands, and so long as it is duly honoured, there is a foundation for social security, and general happiness, and the improvement and progress of our race. And whoever labours on this edifice with usefulness and distinction, whoever clears its foundations, strengthens its pillars, adorns its entablatures, or contributes to raise its august dome still higher in the skies, connects himself in name and fame and character with that which is and must be as endurable as the frame of human society.—*Webster.*



(c) A man gives away a sovereign in Christ's name and for Christ's sake. Look at the elements which constitute that act and give it value. The man made the sovereign honestly; it is his, in point of fair service, by what is called right. If he keeps that sovereign, he will break no law in commerce; if he will it away to his family, he will violate no law in social equity; if he spend it upon himself, society will not condemn him. Yet the man deliberately gives that sovereign away to a poor child, to a friendless stranger, to a Christian society. See what lies behind the deed. The man says, in effect if not in words, "The money may be mine, but I myself am not my own. How then can anything, except temporarily, and under laws of stewardship and responsibility? I have no property

in myself; I am bought with a price; I am God's agent. So far as I have given society an equivalent for the sovereign, it is mine; but the strength, the skill, the knowledge by which I gained it are the gifts of God. The image is Caesar's, but the gold is God's. I will hold what I have as Christ's; holding it so, I instantly yield it at His call, saying,—Thine—oh, wounded blessed Christ—Thine is the right!" So this giving away of the sovereign is not an off-hand deed; it is not done flippantly; it is not done to save appearance; it is not done from external social pressure; it becomes a great religious act, a solemn sacrifice, a holy thank-offering.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Additional illustrations on this point appear on pp. 342-344.

## A NOBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY FAVOUR.

(Verses 48-54.)

We have here—

### I. An extraordinary favour received.

"And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands," &c. (vers. 48, 49). God had not only given them a complete victory and great booty, but He had given them these things without the loss of a single man. In this we have "striking proof of the protection of God; but it is not so marvellous as to furnish any good ground for calling in question the correctness of the narrative. *Rosenmüller* has cited an example from *Tacitus* (Ann. xiii. 39), of the Romans having slaughtered all the foe without losing a single man on the capture of a Parthian castle; and another from *Strabo* (xvi. 11, 28), of a battle in which 1,000 Arabs were slain, and only two Romans. And *Havernick* mentions a similar account from the life of Saladin in his introduction (i. 2, p. 452)." It is also important to bear in mind that "the Midianites were a nomad tribe, who lived by rearing flocks and herds, and therefore were not a warlike people. Moreover, they were probably attacked quite unawares, and being unprepared, were completely routed and cut down without quarter."—*Keil and Del.* Again, in this extraordinary preservation of the army of

Israel we view the hand of the Lord their God. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." He "covered their heads in the day of battle." At His express command they went forth to the war; and He protected them from harm. Their preservation would stamp the war and the victory as His; and so add to the impressiveness of the warning it was intended to convey. (a)

### II. An extraordinary favour acknowledged.

When the officers discovered that every man who went forth to the war had returned from it safely, they went to Moses and declared the fact, taking with them a handsome thank-offering as an acknowledgment of their gratitude to God. Their acknowledgment was—

1. *Voluntary.* No one commanded them or exhorted them to do this: their action was spontaneous and hearty; they offered "not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

2. *Practical.* They had not only thanks upon their lips, but a generous offering in their hands. They sought to express their gratitude by their gifts. (b)

3. *Humble.* They offered this oblation "to make an atonement for their

souls before the Lord." This does not mean that the offering was to expiate any particular offence which they had committed; but to acknowledge unmerited mercies. They felt themselves unworthy of the distinguished favours bestowed upon them. (c)

4. *Liberal.* "All the gold of the offering that they offered up to the Lord was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels," the value of which is variously estimated from £20,000, to £25,000. It was, indeed, a right noble offering. (d)

Learn, that the reception of special mercies should be followed by special acknowledgments thereof. (1) Such acknowledgments are due to God. They cannot be withheld without sin. (2)

Such acknowledgments are a benefit to man. "It is good to give thanks unto the Lord," &c. The practical expression of gratitude enriches the heart. (e)

III. The acknowledgment of extraordinary favours accepted.

"And Moses and Eleazar, the priest, took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord." This means, as we see from Exod. xxx. 16, that the gold was placed in the treasury of the tabernacle.

Learn, that God is graciously pleased to accept the offerings of humble and grateful hearts. (f)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) No prince ever returns safe out of a battle, but may well remember how many blows and bullets have gone *by* him, that might easily have gone *through* him; and how what little, odd, unforeseen chances death has been turned aside, which seemed in a full, ready, and direct career, to have been posting to him. All which passages, if we do not acknowledge to have been guided to their respective ends and effects by the conduct of a superior and a Divine Hand, we do by the same assertion cashier all Providence, strip the Almighty of His noblest prerogative, and make God, not the Governor, but the mere Spectator of the world.—*Dr. South.*

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 341. (c)

(c) Objects seem large or little according to the medium through which they are viewed. In the microscope, what a remarkable change they undergo! The humble moss rises into a graceful tree; the beetle, armed for battle, flashes in golden or silver mail; a grain of sand swells into a mass of rock; and, on the other hand, a mountain looked at through the wrong end of a telescope sinks into a mole hill, and the broad lake into a tiny pool. Even so, according as we look at them, with the eyes of self-condemning humility, or of self-righteous pride, God's mercies seem great or little. For example, a minister of the Gospel passing one day near a cottage, was attracted to its door by the sound of a loud and earnest voice. It was a bare and lonely dwelling; the home of a man who was childless, old, and poor. Drawing near this mean and humble cabin, the stranger at length made out these words, "This, and Jesus Christ too! this, and Jesus Christ too!"

as they were repeated over and over again in tones of deep emotion, of wonder, gratitude, and praise. His curiosity was roused to see what that could be which called forth such fervent, overflowing thanks. Stealing near, he looked in at the patched and broken window; and there in the form of a grey, bent, worn-out son of toil, at a rude table, with hands raised to God, and his eyes fixed on some crusts of bread and a cup of water, sat piety, peace, humility, contentment, exclaiming, "This, and Jesus Christ too!"—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 101, 117, 342.

(e) It is well to feel that whatever good your gift may do to the Church, or the poor, or the sick, it is twice as much benefit to you to give it. It is well to give, because you love to give; as the flower which pours forth its perfume because it never dreamed of doing otherwise; or like the bird which quivers with song, because it is a bird, and finds a pleasure in its notes; or like the sun, which shines, not by constraint, but because, being a sun, it must shine; or like the waves of the sea, which flash back the brilliance of the sun because it is their nature to reflect and not to hoard the light! Oh, to have such grace in our hearts that we shall joyfully make sacrifices unto our God!—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) On our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a fourpenny piece with a hole in it; they like to do it to show their love; and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in heaven. What are our Sunday-school teachings and

our preachings, and all that, but these cracked fourpenny pieces? Just nothing at all; but the Lord allows us to do His work for His own love's sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him.—*Ibid.*

The other day, in walking down the street, a little beggar boy, having discovered that I loved flowers, came and put into my hand a faded little sprig which he had somewhere found. I did not look directly at the scrawny, withered branch, but beheld it through the medium of the boy's heart, seeing what he would have given, not what he gave; and so looking, the shrivelled stem was laden with blossoms of beauty and odour. And if I, who am cold, and ignorant, receive so graciously the offering of a poor child, with what tender joy must our heavenly Father receive the sin-

cere tribute of His creatures, when He looks through the medium of His infinite love and compassion? . . . Christ does not say, "Take the noblest things of life, and bring them perfect to Me, and I will receive them." He says, "Take the lowest and most disagreeable thing; and if you bring it cheerfully for My sake, it shall be to Me a flower of remembrance, and I will press it in the Book of Life, and keep it for ever." Go, then, search for flowers to bring to Christ; and if you cannot find even road-side or pasture weeds—if there are only nettle and briars, and you are willing for His sake to thrust your hand into the thorn bush and bring a branch from thence, He will take it lovingly, and cherish it evermore.—*H. W. Beecher.*

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the account of the allotment of the territory conquered by Israel on the east of the Jordan to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Verse 1. *Jazer* (see on chap. xxi. 32).

*Gilead*, "a mountainous region east of the Jordan; bounded on the north by Bashan, on the east by the Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Gen. xxxi. 21; Deut. iii. 12-17)."—*Bibl. Dict.*

*A place for cattle*; a district of "rich pasture land, with shady forests, and copious streams."—*Ibid.*

Verse 3. *Ataroth, &c.* (see on verses 34-38).

Verses 8-13 (see chaps. xiii. and xiv.).

Verse 8. *Kadesh-barnea* (see on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 9. *Eshcol* (see on chap. xiii. 23).

Verse 17. *Go ready armed*. Keil and Del.: "Equip ourselves hastily."

Verse 23. *Be sure your sin will find you out*. "Lit.: 'Know ye of your sin that it will find you out.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 28. *Moses commanded Eleazar, &c.* (comp. chap. xxxiv. 17-29).

Verse 33. *And unto half the tribe of Manasseh*. "The participation of this half tribe in the possession is accounted

for in ver. 39."—*O. v. 'Gerlach* (see also Josh. xvii. 1). At this time Moses only gave to the two tribes and a half a general promise of this country. The determination of their respective allotments, and the taking possession of them, was not effected until some time afterwards.

Verses 34-36. Places restored and fortified by the Gadites.

Verse 34. *Dibon* (see on chap. xxi. 30).

*Ataroth*—"crowns," probably identical with the ruins Attarus, on Jebel Attarus, and seven miles north-west of Dibon.

*Aroer*—"ruins," now in ruins and called Arrair, upon the very edge of the precipitous north bank of the ravine through which the Arnon flows. Not to be confounded with "Aroer that is before Rabbah" (Josh. xiii. 25).

Verse 35. *Atroth, Shophan*. This should be written Atroth-Shophan; Shophan being added to distinguish it from the Ataroth of the preceding verse. The situation has not been identified.

*Jaazer*, or *Jazer* (see on chap. xxi. 32).

*Jogbehah*, now in ruins and called Jebeiha, seven miles north-west of Jazer.

Verse 36. *Beth-nimrah*—"house of



sweet water;" in ver. 3 contracted into Nimrah; situated five miles north of Libias; now in ruins and called Nahr Nimrin, where the waters of the Wady Shoab enter the Jordan.

*Beth-haran*, the same as Beth-aram, which should be Beth-haram (Josh. xiii. 27). Herod Antipas named it Libias, in honour of Livia, the wife of Augustus Cæsar. It is now in ruins, and is called Rameh; situated not far from the mouth of the Wady Hesbân.

Verses 37, 38. Places restored and fortified by the Reubenites.

Verse 37. *Heshbon* (see on chap. xxi. 25).

*Elealeh*, now called El-A'al, a little more than a mile north-east of Heshbon.

*Kirjathaim*, was probably situated three miles south of Heshbon, where the ruins of et-Teym are now found.

Verse 38. *Nebo*, a town on or near Pisgah, in the mountains of Abarim (see chap. xxi. 20). "A ruined village of the name Neba has been mentioned by travellers as still existing in those parts, and from the latest account seems to be on the most elevated of the crests" of Pisgah, "due west of Baal-meon, and three miles south-west of Heshbon."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Baal-meon*, called Beon in ver. 3; Beth-Baal-meon in Josh. xiii. 17, and Beth-meon in Jer. xlviii. 23, was probably about two miles south-east of Heshbon, where the ruins of Myun are now found.

*Shibmah*, more correctly Sibmah (Isa. xvi. 8), probably four miles east of Heshbon, and now marked by the ruins es-Sameh. "All the places built by the Reubenites were but a short distance from Heshbon, and surrounded this capital. . . . The insertion of the

words *their names being changed*, before Shibmah, is an indication that the latter place did not receive any other name. Moreover, the new names which the builders gave to these towns did not continue in use long, but were soon pressed out by the old ones again."—*Keil and Del.*

And gave other names, &c. Margin: "Heb., 'they called by names the names of the cities.'" "A roundabout way of saying, they called the towns by (other, or new) names."—*Ibid.*

Verse 39. *Machir the son of Manasseh* (comp. Gen. i. 23).

*Went*. Rather "had gone." "The imperfects in ver. 39 are to be understood in the sense of pluperfects."—*Keil and Del.*

*Gilead*. .. More strictly part of north Gilead" (comp. Deut. iii. 13).

Verse 41. *Jair the son of Manasseh*. "Jair was the grandson of a daughter of Machir the son of Manasseh, and therefore a great-grandson of Manasseh on the mother's side. His father, Segub, was the son of Hezron of the tribe of Judah, who had married a daughter of Manasseh (1 Chron. ii. 21, 22); so that Jair, or rather Segub, had gone over with his descendants unto the maternal tribe, contrary to the ordinary rule, and probably because Machir had portioned his daughter with a rich dowry like an heiress."—*Keil and Del.*

*Took the small towns* (comp. Deut. iii. 14).

*Havoth-jair*—villages of Jair.

Verse 42. *Nobah*. This is the only mention of him in the Scriptures.

*Kenath*. Now "Kenawât, a ruined town at the southern extremity of the Lejah, about 20 miles north of Bûsrah."—*Bibl. Dict.*

## THE SELFISH REQUEST OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

### (Verses 1-5.)

This request exhibits—

I. Mean selfishness.

It is marked by an utter absence of

regard for the interests of others. These two tribes think and plan, and petition solely for themselves. In the competi-

tions of business and of professional and social life there is often very much of mean selfishness, and that even amongst persons who are avowedly Christians. But selfishness is utterly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ; and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (a)

### II. Predominant worldliness.

"Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle," &c. (ver. 1). The one consideration which actuated them was this, "The country is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle." They had no care for the unity and prosperity of the nation. Their *patriotism* utterly succumbed to the force of their worldliness. They had no solicitude as to the relation of the coveted country to the institutions of national worship. *Religion* was not sufficiently strong in them to bear up against their eagerness for worldly gain. They resembled Lot in this respect, that they had so keen an eye for worldly gain as to be almost blind to every other consideration (comp. Gen. xiii. 10-13). In this day there are many, who regard themselves as Christians, who resemble the Reubenites and Gadites,—many who are chiefly influenced by temporal and worldly considerations in (1) the selection and conduct of their business; (2) the formation of matrimonial alliances; and (3) the determination of their residence. Temporal gain, social surroundings, salubrity of atmosphere, and similar things, are often deeply considered, while sacred and spiritual things are well-nigh overlooked. (b)

### III. Disregard of the interests and rights of their brethren.

They manifest no concern for the settlement of their brethren of the other tribes in suitable inheritances; and silently they ignore their equal claim to the country which they sought for themselves. The brethren whom the Reubenites and Gadites thus disregarded had shared with them all the toils, hardships, and dangers of the battles by which the land they sought for themselves had been secured; but in

their selfishness the two tribes pay no heed to this fact. The tendency of selfishness is to produce disregard of the claims of others, which is often most unjust. (c)

### IV. Disparagement of their Divine calling and destiny.

"Let this land be given unto thy servants," &c. (ver. 5). Contrast their, "Bring us not over Jordan," with the fervent prayer of Moses, "O Lord God, I pray Thee, let me go over," &c. (Deut. iii. 25). If they did not actually despise the glorious destiny which had been the hope of their ancestors for ages previous, yet they grievously depreciated it. What vast numbers practically despise their exalted spiritual calling in the Gospel for the passing and perishing things of this world!

### V. Want of faith in the Divine promise.

It is not improbable that they had their doubts as to their taking the good land beyond Jordan, and therefore sought to secure for themselves what the nation had already conquered. Such unbelief is a grievous dishonour to God.

### Conclusion.

Mark the *folly* of this request of the Reubenites and Gadites. The country which they desired had very grave disadvantages. It was most exposed to the attacks of their enemies; and it was very difficult of united and successful defence, because the Jordan to some extent cut them off from the great bulk of their nation. Their position very speedily gave rise to misunderstanding between them and their brethren on the other side of Jordan. Their association with heathen neighbours led them into idolatry; and they were the first of the Israelites that were carried into captivity (1 Chron. v. 25, 26). How foolish did Lot's choice of Sodom prove! (Gen. xiv. 12; xix. 15-26). He who renounces spiritual and eternal advantages for material and temporal prosperity makes a fool's choice. "For what is a man profited?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). A selfish policy is generally a self-defeating policy. (d)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) What amazing selfishness visibly appears in the general conduct of mankind, and how little are they, amidst all the culture of education and humanity, all the restraints of law, and all the illuminations, injunctions, and threatenings of religion, disposed to act agreeably to the dictates of truth, righteousness, and benevolence towards each other! A little prosperity, a little power, a very humble office, or some other trifling object of ambition, will at any time make those who have been for life bosom friends, vehement and irreconcilable enemies. In the common bargains between men, again, how rarely is it the design to exchange an equivalent for that which is received, although the only possible rule of honesty; and how generally to make what is called a good, and what is in reality a fraudulent, bargain. How many persons obtain their whole living, and spend their whole lives, in this kind of fraud! What pains are taken to conceal or belie the state of the markets! of our own circumstances, our real intentions, or our ability to fulfil the engagements into which we enter! What base deceptions are practised in cases of bankruptcy; and what frauds perpetrated in order to attain legally the character and immunities of a bankrupt! How difficult has it been even to make a law which can at all secure to creditors an equitable share in the actual remains of a bankrupt's property! How strange would these observations appear in a world of honest, virtuous beings. — *Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

I warn every aspirant for wealth against the infernal canker of selfishness. It will eat out of the heart with the fire of hell, or bake it harder than a stone. The heart of avaricious old age stands like a bare rock in a bleak wilderness, and there is no rod of authority, no incantation of pleasure, which can draw from it one crystal drop to quench the raging thirst for satisfaction. — *H. W. Beecher.*

(b) There are business men in our city to-day who have schemed for a future which, if analysed, would disclose nothing but a careful regard for personal and domestic comfort. I can give you the brief programme of such men; it runs after this fashion—Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements. I thought I could have mentioned a fifth object of pursuit, but I believe this exhausts the whole scheme. Now it is for them to say whether they will persist in urging this request. They are at perfect liberty to leave the City, to abandon the poor, to get away from all that is fetid, noisome, and otherwise offensive; but let them beware lest, in reaching the supposed heaven, they find that they have gone in the wrong direction, and that where they expected heaven to begin they find that they have only reached the outward edge of earth. Men who make arrangements exclusively with a view to physical comfort never

ask the questions which are the chief inquiries of souls that truly live. They do not say, What kind of preaching shall we have in the locality to which we propose to move? What scholastic advantages will be available? What libraries will be accessible? No! What they want is Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements—and they get them; but the fruit which they had covered so eagerly turns to ashes in their mouths. — *Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 166

(c) You would be indignant if you saw a strong man walk into a theatre or lecture-room, and calmly choosing the best place, take his feeble neighbour by the shoulder, and turn him out of it into the back seats or the streets. You would be equally indignant if you saw a stout fellow thrust himself up to a table where some hungry children were being fed, and reach his arm over their heads and take their bread from them. But you are not the least indignant if, when a man has stoutness of thought and swiftness of capacity, and, instead of being long-armed only, has the much greater gift of being long-headed—you think it perfectly just that he should use his intellect to take the bread out of the mouths of all the other men in the town who are of the same trade with him; or use his breadth and sweep of sight to gather some branch of the commerce of the country into one great cobweb, of which he is himself to be the central spider, making every thread vibrate with the points of his claws, and commanding every avenue with the facets of his eyes. You see no injustice in this. — *John Ruskin, M.A.*

(d) It is a singular thing this: That men by grasping lose; that by scraping they get nothing; that by having great bunches of keys to lock up seven-fold doors they can't find what they have locked away—there must be some way inside from the back, some way spirits get into it—at all events the thing goes. God has many ways of turning selfish man's very success to failure and disappointment. The darkness, the mildew, the locust, the frost, the lightning, the winds, are His servants. Thou shalt carry much seed into the field and shalt gather but little in, for the locusts shall consume it. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." "Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied." How God mocks the bad man! How He can turn the wicked man's very success into failure, and how out of selfish ambition He can bring the scorpion whose sting is death. — *Joseph Parker, D.D.*



THE FAITHFUL REBUKE OF MOSES TO THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 6-15.)

In this rebuke Moses indicates—

I. The injustice of their proposal.

"Moses said unto the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?" Their request, or proposal, was unjust towards their brethren. Why should they have as their inheritance that country which all had assisted to conquer, and leave their brethren to conquer other possessions for themselves without their aid? But did Moses misinterpret their request as regards their intentions in this matter? Some think that he did, and that the Reubenites and Gadites intended to aid their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. This view of their conduct does not commend itself to our judgment; for, "when Moses reproved them, the speakers did not reply that they had not cherished the intention attributed to them, but simply restricted themselves to the promise of co-operation in the conquest of Canaan." It is probable that, from "the rapid and easy defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og," they had come to the conclusion "that the remaining ten tribes were quite strong enough to conquer the land of Canaan on the west of Jordan." Whatever view may be taken of their request in this respect, they cannot be acquitted of a want of brotherly feeling, and of interest in the welfare of the nation as a whole; and, therefore, they deserved the rebuke which Moses addressed to them.

Selfishness gravitates towards injustice. (a)

II. The tendency of their proposal to dishearten their brethren.

"Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?" Their request was calculated to produce discouragement, because if it were granted it would be likely to—

1. *Reduce their numbers.* They would have fewer soldiers with which to conquer the land.

2. *Engender dissatisfaction.* The ten tribes would feel that they had reason for dissatisfaction and complaint.

In entering upon any course of public action, we are morally bound to consider what its probable effect will be on the community at large. "None of us liveth to himself." (b)

III. The wickedness of their proposal.

"And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men," &c. Their request was a sin against God, inasmuch as it involved—

1. *Unbelief of His word.* They doubted His promise to give them the good land.

2. *Depreciation of His goodness.* They practically disparaged the inheritance to which God had called them. (See the preceding homily, in which these points are noticed.) (c)

IV. The tendency of their proposal to call down the wrath of God.

1. *The cause of His anger.* "Ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord." With awful intensity His wrath ever burns against sin. It is the "abominable thing which He hates." (d)

2. *The expression of His anger.* "For if ye turn away from after Him, He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people." If the unworthy desires of the Reubenites and Gadites had spread to the other tribes, it would have been most just that God should exclude them from Canaan. The expressions of the Divine wrath are ever perfectly just and right.

3. *The subjects of His anger.* "All this people." The sad consequences of sin are not confined to the actual transgressors. One member of a family sins,

and all the members suffer by reason of that sin. In the nation, one class or party pursues an evil course, and all classes or parties suffer loss or pain. An argument against sin. (e)

V. The solemn example by which Moses enforced his rebuke. (Verses 8-13.)

See our exposition of chapters xiii., xiv.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on *Injustice* see p. 550.

(b) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 428, 485.

(c) Illustrations on this point may be found on p. 252.

(d) God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility, inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword; he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and the deadworthy from the true and lifeworthy; making all human history, and the biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in the place of a Devil's Chaos. So it is in the end; even so

to every man who is a man, and not a mutilous beast, and has eyes to see.—*Thos. Carlyle.*

Other illustrations on *the Wrath of God* appear on pp. 220, 221.

(e) Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus:—"A vessel sailing from Joppa, carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth.'"

The ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

### THE AMENDED PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 16-27.)

Our subject has three main branches—

I. The amended proposal made.

"And they came near unto him, and said, we will build," &c. (verses 16-19). The chief terms of the proposal are these—

1. *That they should provide at once for the safe settlement of their families and their flocks and herds.* "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones, and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land." A reasonable proposal: for it was their duty to look to the safety of their wives and little ones and possessions; and when this was done, they would be more free to go forth to the conquest of the land.

2. *That they would assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan.*

"We ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place." They would take their full share in the hardships and dangers which were to be encountered in taking the country.

3. *That they would not leave their brethren until that conquest was completely effected.* "We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance." They would not return unto their homes until their brethren ceased to require their services.

4. *That they would not seek for any inheritance with their brethren on the other side of the Jordan.* "We will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward." They would not seek for any additional territory as compensa-

tion for helping their brethren in their wars, but would be content with the inheritance for which they were now asking.

Such are the chief terms of the amended proposal of the Reubenites and the Gadites; and they are manifestly reasonable and equitable.

## II. The amended proposal accepted.

"And Moses said unto them, if ye will do this," &c. (verses 20-24).

1. *Moses re-affirms the chief terms of their proposal.* He "said unto them, if ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over Jordan," &c. (verses 20-22). In this way he would impress them with the importance of the engagements they were making, and the solemnity of the obligations incurred by them.

2. *He accepts their proposal as righteous.* "Then afterwards ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep: and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth."

3. *He warns them that if they fail to faithfully fulfil its terms punishment will overtake them.* "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." "The guilt will

haunt you at heels, as a bloodhound, and the punishment will overtake you." Their sin would certainly bring its own punishment. (a)

## III. The amended proposal confirmed.

"And the children of God and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. Our little ones," &c. (verses 25-27). And the proposal thus ratified was faithfully fulfilled (Josh. iv. 12, 13).

### Lessons.

i. *The duty of manifesting a practical regard for the rights and interests of others.* "We are members one of another." "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26). It behoves us not merely to cultivate kind feelings towards others, but also to render practical help in the trials and life. (b)

ii. *The importance of faithfully fulfilling the engagements into which we enter.* Our covenants we should always keep. Our promises should always be translated into performances. (c)

iii. *The delusiveness of the notion that any one can sin and escape the punishment of sin.* The penalty follows the transgression as an inevitable consequence. (d)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vessel was going from Bassorah to Bagdad, the author of *Persian Stories* relates, with several passengers on board. In the course of the voyage the sailors, by way of a joke, put a man in irons, as he lay asleep, and he became a subject of diversion to the whole party till they drew near to the capital. But when the sailors wanted to let him loose the key was nowhere to be found, and after a long and fruitless search they were compelled to send for a blacksmith to knock off the fetters. When, however, the blacksmith came, he refused to do what they wanted till he had authority of the magistrate, for he thought the man might be some criminal whom the officers of justice had laid hold of, and that his friends wished to favour his escape. To the magistrate they accordingly went, who sent down one of his attendants to see into it. But the officer,

when he had heard their story, and had taken the evidence of some of the most respectable among the passengers, shook his head, and with a look of solemnity said it was much too serious a case for him to decide. So they repaired in a body to the magistrate, and carried the poor captive with them. So strange a procession was sure to attract notice, and a crowd soon collected about them, each curious to know the prisoner's offence, and to catch a sight of him; till at length one man, springing forward, seized the captive by the throat and exclaimed, "Here is the villain I have been looking for these two years, ever since he robbed and murdered my poor brother!" Nor would he quit his hold till they came before the magistrate, and the murder being clearly proved, the man who had been confined in joke only was given up to death, as punishment for the



blood he had shed.—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

Another illustration on this point is given on p. 90.

(b) "Two," says Solomon, "are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him who is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." The cobbler could not paint the picture, but he could tell Apelles that the shoe latchet was not quite right, and the painter thought it well to take his hint. Two neighbours, one blind and the other lame, were called to a place at a great distance. What was to be done? The blind man could not see, and the lame man could not walk. Why, the blind man carried the lame one; the blind one assisted by his legs, the other by his eyes. Say to no one, then, "I can do without you;" but be ready to help those who ask your aid, and then, when it is needed, you may ask theirs. Mankind are so much indebted to one another, that they owe mutual attention.—*Anon.*

Man is not himself his own work; he is precisely the most wonderful piece of God's workmanship extant. In this best piece not only he is bound to take delight, but cannot, in a right state of thought, take delight in anything else, otherwise than through himself. Through himself, however, as the sun of creation, not as *the* creation. In himself, as the light of the world; not as being the world. Let him stand in his due relation to other creatures, and to inanimate things—know them all and love them, as made for him, and he for them; and he becomes himself the greatest and holiest of them. But let him cast off this relation, despise and forget the less creation round him, and instead of being the light of the world, he is as a sun in space—a fiery ball, spotted with storm.

All the diseases of mind leading to fatal ruin consist primarily in this isolation. They are the concentration of man upon himself; whether his heavenly interests or his worldly interests, matters not; it is the being *his own* interests which makes the regard of them so mortal. Every form of asceticism on one side, of sensualism on the other, is an isolation of his soul or of his body; the fixing his thoughts upon them alone: while every healthy state of nations and of individual minds consists in the unselfish presence of the human spirit everywhere, energizing over all things; speaking and living through all things.—*John Ruskin, M.A.*

(c) When Justice North, afterwards the Lord Keeper Guildford, during one of his circuits, visited the Duke of Beaufort, at his princely seat at Badminton, the Lord Arthur, then a child about five years old, was very angry with the judge (he said) for hanging men. The judge replied, "that if they were not hung, they would kill and steal." "No," said the little boy, "you should make them promise upon their honour they would not do so, and then they would not." How delicate must the noble principle have been in the breast of this infant noble, and how rich a soil wherein to plant and to cherish it.—*Biblical Museum.*

I have somewhere met with an anecdote of Lord Chatham, who had promised that his son should be present at the pulling down of a garden wall. The wall was, however, taken down during his absence, through forgetfulness; but, feeling the importance of his word being held sacred, Lord Chatham ordered the workmen to rebuild it, that his son might witness its demolition, according to his father's promise.—*F. F. Trench.*

(d) Illustrations on this topic are given on pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

## CONFLICT THE CONDITION OF ATTAINMENT, AND SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN.

(Verses 20-23.)

Old Testament histories are New Testament instructions. " whatsoever things were written aforetime," &c. (Rom. xv. 4). They teach that human nature is the same in all ages; that God's government is the same, &c.

I. A truth to be confirmed—that those who would share in the inheritance must engage in the conflict.

In this warfare not to fight is to perish. To obtain the possession we must "go armed before the Lord to war." Life is a scene of conflict between the seed of the Serpent, &c.

1. *This is opposed to the thoughtless impiety of the worldling;* who, intent upon present objects, has no sympathy with the claims of Truth, the designs of God, or the conflicts of the Church.

They forget that in the great struggle always going on between truth and error, holiness and sin, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell, every man must take a part—for Christ against Satan, or for Satan against Christ. The moment that the life of faith begins, the fight of faith begins. We cannot put off our armour till we put on our

shroud. It was a striking saying of a celebrated captain: "There's the enemy; if you don't kill them, they will kill you."

They forget that this war, like that against Canaan, is divinely appointed. Six times in this connection it is stated that it was "before the Lord" they were to "go armed to war." The conflict was begun at His command; and not to end but with His permission.

Reuben and Gad are fitting types of worldly men. They had a fine eye for worldly gain. They would willingly engage with the warriors up to the point of securing their inheritance, and then fall back. Every unconverted man is a Reubenite at heart. For the world all eagerness, &c.

2. *This is opposed to the sinister and selfish designs of the hypocrite; who is always pursuing some secondary object.* We are to guard against "all the deceits of the world." Calvin, speaking of the Reubenites, thinks there was "much amiss in the principle they went upon, preferring their own ease to the Church's good, and having no such regard to the honour of God and the Covenant of Promise, as they ought to have had." Their request seemed to arise from contempt of the good land, or doubt of God's power to bring them through. It argued a culpable neglect of their brethren. But the men of Reuben, like other hypocrites, had other ends. No man acts on a single motive. Reuben had lost his birthright, and could not claim a first inheritance. Manasseh, though the elder, was always eclipsed and overshadowed by Ephraim, the recognised head of ten tribes. And Gad had a blot on his escutcheon, being descended from Zilpah, Leah's handmaid. Each of these, therefore, had a reason for wishing an inheritance on that side the Jordan.

3. *As opposed to the baseness of the Antinomian; who is all for privilege, and nothing for obligation.*

II. A warning to be applied—that sin brings punishment; and that those who think to sin with impunity, under a dispensation of mercy, will find them-

selves fearfully disappointed. "Besure your sin will find you out."

No impression seems more common than the hope of escape; but none more fallacious. Some think they can stop at a certain point; others that they can skilfully conceal their transgression; or that they can repent in time. Sinning on a plan.

But the certain connexion between crime and punishment is part of the public creed of all nations. Hence the tendency to convert calamities into judgments. We look for and record any token of retributive justice, by which the consequences of men's actions are brought home to themselves.

1. *In the way of natural consequence.* The law that regulates the succession of the seasons is not more certain than that which regulates the just recompense of reward that follows sin. God who gives to every seed its own body, makes the harvest of guilt answerable to the seed time. The interval may be long, but the result is certain. The man who is undutiful to his parents, may be visited by the equal undutifulness of his own child. Jacob, who deceived Isaac, was himself deceived by Laban and Leah, and by his own sons. Agag, who made mothers childless, was slain by Samuel, and his mother made childless.

2. *In the way of Providential dispensation.* God sees sin wherever it exists: He is angry with the wicked. For sin He drowned one world, &c.

See it in guilty nations. The Jews crucified our Lord: they were crucified by the Romans in the siege, &c. The Roman emperors persecuted the Christians: they themselves came to untimely deaths. Spain founded the Inquisition: she has been sunk to the level of a third-rate power. France persecuted the Huguenots: she has been a hot-bed of revolutions.

See it in guilty men. Cain, Joseph's brethren, Gehazi, Achan, David.

3. *In the way of final retribution.*  
III. A personal application to be made.

Samuel Thodey.  
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## THE CERTAINTY THAT SIN WILL FIND US OUT.

(Verse 23.)

The fear of punishment, if not the best, is certainly the most common preservative from sin. Under the Mosaic dispensation, it was the principal motive with which the Divine commands were enforced. Nor did St. Paul think it wrong to "persuade men by the terrors of the Lord." Consider—

**I. In what manner we have sinned against the Lord.**

It would be useless to attempt an enumeration of all the sins we have committed.

1. We shall confine ourselves to *that view of them which the context suggests*. The sin against which Moses cautioned the two tribes was unfaithfulness to their engagements; and a preferring of their present ease to the executing of the work which God had assigned them. Now, we promised to renounce the world, &c., but how have we kept the covenant which we solemnly entered into? &c.

2. *But the sin referred to in the text will scarcely bear any comparison with ours*. The Israelites were to maintain a warfare with men; we with the devil (Eph. vi. 11, 12). They were to fight for an earthly portion; we, an heavenly (1 Cor. ix. 25). They might have urged that *their aid was unnecessary when God was engaged*; and that after all the prize was an inadequate reward for such fatigue and danger. But can we hope to conquer without exerting our own powers? Or can we say that the prize held out to us is not worth the contest? If our engagements be more solemn, our work more noble, and our reward more glorious than theirs, our sin in disregarding all must be proportionably greater. Yet who amongst us must not confess that he has forgotten all his vows? Then we may say to all, "Ye have sinned against the Lord."

**II. What assurance we have that our sin shall find us out.**

1. *Sin may be said to find us out when it brings down the Divine judgments*

*upon us*. Conscience, stupefied or seared, often forgets to execute its office; nor speaks till God, by His providence or grace, awaken it. Sometimes years elapse before it reproves our iniquities (Gen. xlii. 21, 22). Sometimes it testifies to our face as soon as our sin is committed (Matt. xxvi. 74, 75; xxvii. 3, 4). Whenever it thus condemns us, our sins may be said to find us out. But the expression in the text imports rather the visitation of God for sin. There is a punishment annexed to every violation of God's law (Ezek. xviii. 4). And sin then finds us out effectually when it brings that punishment upon us.

2. *That it will find us out, we have the fullest possible assurance*. (1) *The perfections of God's nature* absolutely preclude all hope of impunity. If He be omnipresent, He must see; if omniscient, remember; if holy, hate; and if just, punish the violations of His law. If He be possessed of veracity and power, He must execute the judgments He has denounced. (2) *The declarations of His Word* abundantly confirm this awful truth (Psa. xxi. 8; Prov. xi. 21; Isa. iii. 11; Rom. ii. 6, 9). Sin leaves a track which can never be effaced; and evil, however slow-paced, will surely overtake it (Psa. cxl. 11; Prov. xiii. 21). However scoffers may exult in their security, their ruin is fast approaching (Deut. xxix. 19, 20; 2 Pet. ii. 3; iii. 4, 9). (3) *The remarkable instances of sin being detected and punished in this world* afford strong additional testimony (Josh. vii. 14-18; 2 Sam. xii. 9-12; 2 Kings v. 26, 27). How much more then shall the most hidden things be brought to light hereafter! (4) *The appointment of a day of final retribution* puts the matter beyond a possibility of doubt (Eccles. xii. 14). We may, then, say to every sinner, "Be sure your sin," &c.

INFER—

1. *How earnest should we be in search-*



ing out our own sins! (Psa. l. 21; Luke xiii. 3.)

ii. *How thankful should we be that a way of escape is provided for us!* The Man Christ Jesus is an hiding place from the impending storm. Every perfection of Deity is pledged to save a believing penitent (1 John i. 9). We are confirmed in this hope by the most

positive declarations of Scripture (Isa. xlv. 22; Mic. vii. 18, 19; Heb. viii. 12). We have most authentic and astonishing instances of sin forgiven (2 Sam. xii. 13; Luke vii. 47; xxiii. 43). Let this blessed assurance encourage us to take refuge under the Saviour's wings (Matt. xxiii. 37).—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

## THE SELF-RETRIBUTIVE NATURE OF SIN.

(Verse 23.)

“Be sure your sin will find you out.”

The text teaches the solemn and admonitory truth that sin carries with it its own punishment, which will eventually seize upon the sinner. This truth is confirmed by—

### I. The germinal character of human actions.

Every action of life resembles a seed, which brings forth fruit after its kind. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;” &c. (a)

### II. The exercise of memory.

In the exercise of its retentive function, memory holds all the sins we have ever committed; and in the exercise of its reproductive function, it may at any moment bring them forth, an awful procession, in clear and terrible aspects. Memory is “the bane of the wicked;” for it torments them by vividly appalling representations of their evil deeds. In this way the sin overtakes and smites the sinner. (b)

### III. The operations of conscience.

The awakening of conscience to a sense of its guilt is the kindling of a hell within the breast from which there is no escape, except through the Cross of Christ. Guilt made Macbeth, the noble and brave soldier, cry out:—

“How is't with me when every noise appals me!”

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth.” “The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them: and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall

fall when none pursueth.” “Terrors take hold on him as waters.”

“That pang where more than madness lies!

The worm that will not sleep, and never dies.  
Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night,

That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light:

That winds around, and tears the quivering heart,

Ah! wherefore not consume it and depart?”

—*Byron.* (c)

### IV. The power of habit.

“Habit,” says Sir W. Hamilton, “is formed by the frequent repetition of the same action, or passion, and this repetition is called *consuetude*, or *custom*.”

“All habits gather by unseen degrees,  
As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas.”

—*Dryden.*

“Habit is at first like a spider's web; if neglected, it becomes a thread of twine; next, a cord or rope, and eventually a *cable*; and then who can break it?” “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” (d)

### Conclusion—

i. *Warning against sin.* Let the certainty of its punishment deter you from the commission of sin.

ii. *Motive to trust in Christ.* Through Him we may obtain forgiveness of sin, cleansing from its stains, and freedom from its power.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This topic is illustrated on pp. 89, 265, 481.

(b) I knew a man who said, that in falling twenty feet, when he expected to die, the thoughts of a lifetime seemed to pass through his mind. He thought of his business, of his wife, of his children, and of that eternity to which he was going. A life seemed to pass through his mind, and nothing was lost. So it will be when memory summons the acts of a life at the last tribunal. Nothing is lost. Thoughts once impressed, but apparently lost, will come out again. A life is written on our memory, as with invisible ink. It is apparently lost to our frail sight while here; but, in the judgment light, it will be seen enveloped around us, and will be unrolled till every line and letter is made visible. I knew a sailor once, who said, that when in a storm, on the giddy mast, while trying to furl a sail, and could not, he cursed God. It passed out of his mind for twenty years; but then, in a season of excitement, he said, "Now I remember it. I am lost."—*H. W. Beecher.*

Let a man try to forget any dreadful thing, of which he hates the remembrance, and the more he tries to forget it, the more surely he remembers it, the more he bodies it forth, and every thrust he makes at it causes it to glare up anew, reveals some new horror in it. Doubtless, this peculiarity in our mental constitution is destined to play a most terrific part in the punishment of men's sins in eternity; for there can be nothing so dreadful as the remembrance of sin, and nothing which men will strive with more intense earnestness to hide from and forget, than the recollection of their sins; and yet every effort they make at such forgetfulness only gives to such sins a more terrible reality, and makes them blaze up in a more lurid light to the conscience. Oh, if they could but be forgotten! But the more intense is the earnestness of this wish, the more impossible becomes the forgetfulness, the more terribly the dreaded evil stands out. There are cases, even in this life, in which men would give ten thousand worlds, if they possessed them, could they only forget; but how much more in eternity! The man that has committed a secret midnight murder, how often, think you, though perhaps not a human being suspects it, would he give the riches of the material universe, if he had them at command, could he but forget that one moment's crime! But it is linked to his very constitution; and every time he tries to cut the chain, he does but rattle and rouse the crime out of its grave into a new existence.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

Will no remorse, will no decay,  
O Memory, soothe thee into peace?  
When life is ebbing fast away,  
Will not thy hungry vultures cease?  
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Ah, no! as weeds from fading free,  
Noxious and rank, yet verdantly

Twine round a ruined tower;  
So to the heart, untamed, will cling  
The memory of an evil thing

In life's departing hour:  
Green is the weed when grey the wall,  
And thistles rise while turrets fall.

Yet open Memory's book again—

Turn o'er the lovelier pages now,  
And find that balm for present pain  
Which past enjoyment can bestow:  
Delusion all, and void of power!

For 'e'en in thought's serenest hour,  
When past delights are felt,  
And Memory shines on scenes of woe,  
'Tis like the moonbeam on the snow,

That gilds, but cannot melt;  
That throws a mocking lustre o'er,  
But leaves it cheerless as before.

—*J. A. Herald.*

(c) My dream was lengthened after life;  
O, then began the tempest to my soul!

I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,  
With that grim ferryman which poets write of  
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.

The first that there did greet my stranger soul,  
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,

Who cried aloud—*What scourge for perjury  
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?*  
And so he vanished: Then came wand'ring by  
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair  
Dabbled in blood; and he shrieked out aloud,  
*Clarence is come,—false, fleeing, perjured  
Clarence—*

*That stabbd me in the field by Tewkesbury;  
Seize on him, furies, take him to your torments!*  
With that, methought, a legion of foul fiends  
Environed me, and howled in mine ears  
Such hideous cries, that, with the very noise,  
I trembling waked, and, for a season after,  
Could not believe but that I was in hell;  
Such terrible impression made my dream.

I have done these things  
That now give evidence against my soul.

—*Shakespeare, Richard III. i. 4.*

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;  
Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree;  
All several sins, all used in each degree,  
Throng to the bar, crying all—*Guilty! guilty!*  
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,  
And, if I die, no soul will pity me—  
Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself  
Find in myself no pity to myself.

Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd  
Came to my tent; and every one did threat  
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

—*Ibid. v. 8.*

(d) Here is a young man who says, "I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it is exhilarating. It makes me feel well. I can talk better, think better, feel better. I cannot see why people have such a prejudice against it." A few years pass on, and he wakes up, and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which

he tries to break, but cannot; and he cries out, "O Lord God, help me!" It seems as though God would not hear his prayer, and in agony of body and soul he cries out, "It biteth like a serpent, and it stingeth like an adder." How bright it was at the start! how black it was at the last!—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

# SIN WILL COME TO LIGHT.

(Verse 23.)

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Men, when they commit sin, wish to think that they are done with the thing for ever. Few succeed in convincing themselves of this huge error; but some do think that the Most High doth not regard, and will never call them to account. Others think that the day of God's dealing with them will not come till by some means, not sanctioned by Scripture, not approved by sound reason, they will make all right. In many ways sinners practise deceit on themselves and harden themselves in iniquity. Men are not done with sin when they have committed it. After sin comes a dread account. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

I. God certainly shows His purpose to punish sin by the way He causes woe to come on some sinners here.

The drunkard, the glutton, and the cheat, the liar and the lewd, are not the only examples. Most frauds are exposed. Nearly all murders are brought to light. Men may plot very secretly, and think their crimes are hid. But Providence calls on stones and beams of timber, on tracks and pieces of paper, to be witnesses of the crime. Then all that class of sins which are not punishable by human laws, God often punishes with a loss of respect, esteem, or confidence. After twenty-four years of concealment, Joseph's brethren are brought to feel and say that God had found out their iniquity. Ibycus, a famous Grecian poet, was going to Corinth. Robbers attacked and murdered him. As he was falling and dying, he looked around to see if

there were no witnesses or avengers. All he could see was a flock of cranes high in the air. He called on them to avenge his blood. You may think that was an idle call. The robbers thought so. They got their prey, and came to Corinth. They went to the open theatre. As they sat there, they looked up and saw above them a flight of cranes, and one scoffingly said, "Lo, there are the avengers of Ibycus." The words were heard by some one near them. Already fears of the poet's safety began to be common. The gang, on being questioned, betrayed themselves, and *The Cranes of Ibycus* became a proverb, like that we have in English, *Murder will out*.

II. Men might be sure that their sin will find them out by the sore judgments which God sometimes sends on men for their sins.

On this matter we should exercise candour, caution, and charity, and not call that an angry judgment which is but a dark doing of love. Still there are on earth sore and marked judgments. Look at the history of Achan, of Korah, &c. Of thirty Roman Emperors, Proconsuls, and high officials, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and rage against the early Christians, it is recorded that one became speedily deranged after an act of great cruelty; one was slain by his own son; one became blind; the eyes of one started out of his head; one was drowned; one was strangled; one died in a miserable captivity; one fell dead in a manner that will not bear to be told: one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians



were put to death, because they could not abide the stench that filled his room; two committed suicide; a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the bloody work; five were assassinated by their own servants or people; five others died the most horrible deaths, having many and strange diseases; and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. Men have more to do with sin than to commit it.

III. One may escape detection and strange judgments, and still his sins may find him out in the fears, and clamours, and remorse of conscience.

Remorse is remorseless. Like fire, it burns all around it. No man can protect himself against his sins flashing him in the face at any moment. The Bible, preaching, singing, praying, a marriage, a trial in court, the sight of the man he has injured, or one that looks like him, or anything may arouse his conscience into fury at the most inconvenient time.

IV. But even if one escape all these things, yet if he dies unpardoned his sins will find him out in the next world.

Luke xii. 2; 1 Tim. v. 24; Eccles. x. 20.

Why do not men admit the force of these truths, and act accordingly? The reasons are very clear.

1. *Some think their sins will not find them out because God has not yet called them to account* (Eccles. viii. 11). Such men forget that with the Lord one day is "as a thousand years," &c. (2 Pet. iii. 8-10).

2. *In this world sinners often forget their sins, and think God has also forgotten them* (Ps. x. 11). But God forgets nothing.

3. *Some think their sin will not find them out because they doubt whether God is holy and just, and whether He takes notice of human actions* (Ps. xciv. 5-7). But that is practical atheism (Prov. xv. 3; Eccles. xii. 14).

4. *Some think their sin will not find them out because God is merciful.* But mercy slighted and rejected can save no man. All the cooling fountains can do no good to him who does not drink them. O sinner, "be sure your sin will find you out." You may now live in ease and in error. You may now harden your heart in pride. But you must meet your sins at God's tribunal. Remember that. O be wise, be wise unto salvation. — *W. S. Plumer, D.D.*

#### THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARRYING OUT THE PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 28-42.)

In these verses there are several things which require a brief notice.

I. The arrangements made by Moses for carrying out the agreement into which he had entered with the Reubenites and Gadites.

1. *His command to Eleazar and Joshua.* "Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun," &c. (vers. 28-30). Knowing that before the engagements could be fulfilled he would "be gathered unto his people," he charges the authorities of the nation to carry them out.

2. *His grant of the land to the two and*

*a half tribes.* "Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben," &c. Thus he provides as carefully and completely as possible for the fulfilment of the agreement into which, as the head of the nation, he had entered. Learn from the conduct of Moses—

i. *That men drawing near to the close of life should provide for the fulfilment of the engagements which they have made.* It behoves them "to set their house in order," &c. (comp. 2 Kings xx. 1).

(a)

ii. *That men should not enter into en-*

gagements for the fulfilment of which they are unable to make provision.

II. The renewal of the promise of the Reubenites and Gadites.

"And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered," &c. Here are two considerations—

1. *The engagement which they renew.* They pledge themselves, for the third time, to do the will of Jehovah by aiding their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. "As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do," &c.

2. *The object which they had in view in renewing the engagement.* "That the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours."

III. The bestowment upon the half tribe of Manasseh of northern Gilead and Bashan.

"And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh," &c. (vers. 40-42). This half tribe of Manasseh had not asked for their inheritance east of the Jordan. Wherefore, then, was it assigned to them there? Of the three tribes "who had elected to remain on that side of the Jordan, Reuben and Gad had chosen their lot because the country was suitable to their pastoral possessions and tendencies. But Machir, Jair, and Nobah, the sons of Manasseh, were no shepherds. They were pure warriors, who had taken the most prominent part in the conquest of those provinces which up to that time had been conquered, and whose deeds are constantly referred to (ver. 39; Deut. iii. 13-15) with credit and renown. 'Jair the son of Manasseh took all the tract of Argob. . . . sixty great cities' (Deut. iii. 14; 4). 'Nobah took Kenath, and the daughter towns thereof, and called it after his own name' (ver. 42). 'Because Machir was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan' (Josh. xvii. 1). The district which these ancient warriors

conquered was among the most difficult, if not the most difficult, in the whole country. It embraced the hills of Gilead, with their inaccessible heights and impassable ravines, and the almost impregnable tract of Argob, which derives its modern name of *Lejah* from the secure 'asylum' it affords to those who take refuge within its natural fortifications" (*Bibl. Dict.*). Thus their inheritance may have been assigned to them there—

1. *As an acknowledgment of their bravery.* The words of ver. 39 suggest this, "The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had gone to Gilead, and taken it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. And Moses gave Gilead," &c.

2. *As a precaution for the common safety.* The occupation of this frontier country by these bold and valiant warriors would tend to promote the security of the nation. Moses might have had this in view in settling them there.

IV. The alteration of the names of the places.

"Nebo and Baal-meon (their names being changed), and Sluimamah; and gave other names unto the cities which they builded." The alteration of the names of the towns arose probably from—

1. *A desire not to mention the names of the heathen deities after which some of them were called.* Nebo and Baal are such names. The Israelites were commanded not to utter the name of false gods (Exod. xxiii. 13; Josh. xxiii. 7).

2. *A desire to perpetuate their own names.* "Nobah took Kenath, and called it Nobah, after his own name." "They call their lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11). Deep is the desire of men to be remembered on the earth when they have passed away from it for ever. (b)

# ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on the Fulfilment of promises appear on p. 554.

In connection with the important subject of  
o o

preparation for death—for we have all to die, and the sooner we distinctly understand what it requires to do so honourably and safely, the

better,—allow me to mention, first, a wise and equitable arrangement of your temporal affairs. “Have you made your will?” There is an admirable tract with this title. I wish it were better known, and more generally read. He who has property that will survive him, and a family possessing indisputable claims on his remembrance, ought not to give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids, till he has made such a testamentary disposition of his estate as shall be to the honour of his Christian character, and save his family from contention, litigation, and strife, in the event of his removal.—*Thos. Raffles D.D., LL.D.*

But not that way do all men make their departure. Men ought to have their worldly affairs settled, so that the executors and administrators will not be confounded; and so that what they have honestly earned be not scattered among those who have no right to it. If the sudden announcement should be made to you to-night, what would be the state of your families? Have you done all that you can to fit them for heaven? Could you feel, “Whatever I, as father or mother, could do, I have done. They will remember how I prayed for them and talked with them; and when they look at my picture, they will say: ‘That was a Christian parent. I want to go in the same way, and gain the same heaven.’”?

The keys of this organ are twelve feet from the organ-pipes; but every time those keys are touched the pipes resound. So these parents are now exercising influences which will respond far on in the eternity of their children. If they play an anthem now, it will be an anthem then. If they play a dirge now, it will be a dirge for ever.—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(b) Various are the contrivances of vain men to have their names written on earth, and to procure, after their deaths, an imaginary immortality, for themselves and their families, in the memory and conversation of posterity; which is not often obtained; and, if obtained, is of no value; when, with less trouble, they might have had their names written in heaven, and have secured to themselves a blessed immortality, in the glorious kingdom of their Redeemer.—*Ep. Horne.*

“Some sink outright,

O’er them and o’er their names the billows close,

To-morrow knows not they were ever born.

Others a short memorial leave behind;

Like a flag floating when the bark’s engulfed, It floats a moment, and is seen no more.

One Cæsar lives; a thousand are forgot.”

—*Young.*

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have a list of the places at which the Israelites encamped from their departure from Egypt unto their arrival at the Jordan (vers. 1-49), and directions as to the conquest and distribution of Canaan (vers. 50-56).

Verses 1 and 2, form the introduction to the list of encampments.

Verse 3. *Rameses*, a city in “the western part of the land of Goshen.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 4. *Buried*. “Rather, ‘were burying.’”—*Speaker’s Comm.*

Verse 5. *Succoth* — “booths” or “tents:” situated probably “nearly due east of Rameses, and fifteen miles distant in a straight line.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 6. *Etham*, which is in the edge of the wilderness. “It is reasonable to place Etham where the cultivable land ceases, near the *Seba Biâr*, or Seven Wells, about three miles from the wes-

tern side of the ancient head of the gulf.”—*Ibid.*

Verse 7. *Pi hahiroth*. The word is most probably Egyptian, and signifies, “the bed of reeds.”

*Baal zephon*, or “*Typhon*, a name of Baal as representative of the opposite of mundane order and harmony, or of the god ruling in winter”—(*Fuerst*). But Mr. Stuart Poole in *Bibl. Dict.* gives as its meaning “place of Zephon;” and he says, “We place Baal-zephon on the western shore of the gulf of Suez, a little below its head, which at this time was about thirty or forty miles northward of the present head.”

*Migdol* = “a tower.” Sometimes, a military watch-tower, or a look-out in a vineyard. “*Migdol* and *Baal-zephon*,” says Mr. Poole, “must have been opposite to one another, and the latter behind *Pi-hahiroth* with reference to the Israelites.”

Verse 8. *Wilderness of Etham*; “i.e.,



that part of the great wilderness of Shur which adjoined Etham."—*Speaker's Comm.*

*Marah.* "A satisfactory site has been found for Marah. Howârah, at the head of Wady Amârah, where even now caravans halt in their journey to Sinai, possessing a spring at times so bitter that neither men nor camels can drink of it."—*Alford.*

*Elim* "is generally acknowledged to be the present Wady Ghurundel, two and a-half hours S.E. of Mara, and even now a famous watering-place of the Arabs."—*Ibid.*

Verse 10. *By the Red Sea.* This "must almost certainly be at the descent of the Wady Taiyibeh on the sea, or in some portion of the plain of Mürkhâh, before they again turned up into the mountains."—*Stanley.*

Verse 11. *Wilderness of Sin.* "The whole of this district between Elim and Sinai is probably the wilderness of Sin" (*Alford*). Knobel, however, maintains, and with him Keil agrees, "that the wilderness of Sin is the great sandy plateau Debbet er Ramleh, between the desert of Et-Tih and Sinai. This plateau begins near Elim and stretches S. Eastwards towards the range in which Sinai must be included."—*Ibid.*

Verse 13. *Dophkah . . . Alush,* not mentioned in Exodus, were most probably situated somewhere in the northern portion of the wilderness of Sin; but their respective sites have not been identified.

Verse 14. *Rephidim* = "rests" or "stays," was most probably situated in Wady Feiran (see *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 38-42).

Verse 15. *The wilderness of Sinai.* The Sinai of the Law was most probably the Râs Süfsâfeh, which is not a distinct mountain, but the northern portion of Jebel Mûsa, and is thus described by Dean Stanley: "The cliff rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur, from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of 'the mount that

might be touched,' and from which the 'voice' of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain below." The people were most probably assembled in er-Râhah, "the most suitable spot imaginable for the assembling of many thousands of people. It is upwards of two miles long and half a mile broad" (see *Sinai and Pal.*, pp. 39-44; *Alford* on Exod. xix. 1; and *Dr. Smith's Bibl. Dict. art. Sinai*).

Verse 17. *Kibroth-hattaavah* (see on chap. xi. 34; p. 181).

*Hazereth* (see on chap. xi. 35, p. 181).

Verse 18. *Rithmah*, derived from *retem*, the broom plant, was in the desert of Paran (chap. xii. 16), and probably the same locality as "the Wady Abu Retemat, which is not very far to the south of Kadesh, 'a wide plain with shrubs and *retem*,' i.e., broom. This spot was well adapted for a place of encampment for Israel, which was so numerous that it might easily stretch into the desert of Zin, and as far as Kadesh" (chap. xiii. 21, 26).—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 19-36 give the names of the places of encampment "during the years of penal wandering. The determination of their position is difficult, because during the period there was no definite line of march pursued."—*Speaker's Comm.* "Of all the seventeen places not a single one is known, or can be pointed out with certainty, except Ezion-geber."—*Keil and Del.*

*Rimmon-parez* = "the pomegranate of the breach." The locality has not been identified.

Verse 20. *Libnah* = "whiteness." "Probably the Laban of Deut. i. 1, and situated on or near either the Elanitic gulf or the Arabah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *Rissah* = "heaps of ruins." Probably identical with Rasa of the Roman tables, "32 Roman miles from Ailah (Elah), and 203 miles south of Jerusalem."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 22. *Kehelathah* = "assembling." Nothing is known of the place.

Verse 23. *Mount Shapher* = "beau-

tiful mountain."—*Fuerst*. Perhaps "the hill now known as Jebel-esh-Shureif, about 40 miles north-west of Râs-el-Kâ'a, north-west of Ezion geber, and west or south-west of el-Beyâneh."

—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 24. *Haradah* = "place of terror."—*Fuerst*. "Probably Wady-el-Khâraizeh, about 15 miles south-east of Jebel-esh-Shureif."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 25. *Makheleth* = "Places of meeting." Unknown.

Verse 26. *Tahath* = "a depression or valley."—*Fuerst*. The site has not been identified.

Verse 27. *Tarah* = "station." Situation unknown.

Verse 28. *Mithcah* = "sweet fountain" (*Fuerst*); or "place of sweetness"—*Bibl. Dict.* Unknown.

Verse 29. *Hashmonah*. The meaning of this word is doubtful; it may be "fat" or "fertile soil." Probably it is the Heshmon of Josh. xv. 27, and identical with "the fountain Ain Hasb, in the north-west of the Arabah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 30. *Moseroth* = "place of chastisement."—*Fuerst*. In Deut. x. 6, we have the singular form of the word (*Moserah*) instead of the plural, as in this place. In that place it is said, "there Aaron died." Its site has not been identified.

Verse 31. *Bene-jaakan* = "the children of Jaakan" (see Gen. xxxvi. 27; 1 Chron. i. 42). In Deut. x. 6, "Beeroth (*i.e.* wells) of the children of Jaakan." There it is stated that "the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera;" whilst here, it is said, "they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Bene-jaakan." The two passages probably relate to different journeys. This one to a journey during the thirty-seven years of penal wanderings; and that in Deut. to the march in the fortieth year, when they journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor, where Aaron died (chap. xx. 22-29). Beeroth-bene-jaakan "may be identical with the wells of sweet water now known as el-Mayein, which lying up high among

the hills, more than 60 miles due west of Mount Hor, would be likely to be visited by the Israelites either immediately before or after their encampment at Moserah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 32. *Hor-hagidgad*. "If the initial letter be *Kheth* (as in Tex. Recep., Syr., and later Targum) the name will denote the cavern of Gidgad; if *He* (as some few MSS., Samaritan text, earlier Targ., LXX., Vulg. read) it will denote the summit of Gidgad. In Deut. x. 7, we read simply Gudgodah or Gudgod."—*Ibid.* The situation has not been identified.

Verse 33. *Jotbathah* = "goodness." "In Deut. x. 7, 'Jotbath (Heb. *Jotbathah*) a land of rivers of waters.' This place is perhaps to be identified with Wady Tâbah, six miles south-west of the head of the Elanitic gulf; where is a broad plain running down to the sea, containing many palm trees and tamarisks, and well supplied with water."—*Ibid.*

Verse 34. *Ebronah*; "*i.e.* 'passage.' This station apparently lay on the shore of the Elanitic gulf, at a point where the ebb of the tide left a ford across. Hence the later Targum renders the word 'fords.'"—*Ibid.*

Verse 35. *Ezion Geber* = "the giant's back bone." "Ezion Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings ix. 26). Dean Stanley says, "There is nothing to fix the precise site of Ezion Geber." But it seems almost certain that it was at what was then the northern extremity of the Elanitic gulf, some miles north of the present head of the gulf, at Ain-el-Ghudyân.

Verse 36. *The wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh*. See on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21, 26; xx. 16.

Verse 37. *Mount Hor, &c.* See on chap. xx. 22.

Verses 37-40. See on chaps. xx. 22—xxi. 3.

Verses 41-43. *Zalmonah, . . . Punon, . . . Oboth*. See on chap. xxi. 10.

Verse 44. *Ije-abarim*. See on chap. xxi. 11.

Verse 45. *Dibon-gad*. See on chap. xxi. 30.

Verse 46. *Almon-diblathaim* is almost certainly identical with *Beth-diblathaim* mentioned by Jeremiah (xlvi. 22), in connection with *Dibon* and *Nebo*. Its site is unknown; but "it is to be sought for to the north or north-west of *Dibon*."

Verse 47. *The mountains of Abarim, before Nebo*, "is only another name for the 'valley of the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah.'" See on chap. xxi. 20.

Verse 48. *The plains of Moab, &c.* See on chap. xxii. 1.

Verse 49. *Beth-jesimoth* = "house of the wastes," a town situated on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea (Josh. xii. 3). Later it was allotted to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20).

*Abel-shittim*. See on chap. xxv. 1.

Verse 50—chap. xxxvi. 13. "This last portion of the book concludes the record of the long wandering of the

people by certain directions respecting that conquest and allotment of the Promised Land, with which the wandering terminated. These regulations are divided into two sections by the re-insertion at xxxv. 1 of the introductory formula with which xxxiii. 50 opens. Of these portions the former contains commands concerning (1) the extermination of the Canaanitish nations, xxxiii. 50-56; (2) the boundaries of the Promised Land, xxxiv. 1-15; (3) the names of the men who should allot the land, xxxiv. 16-29."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Pictures*. Rather, "idols of stone" (comp. Lev. xxvi. 1).

*Molten images*; "idols cast from brass."

*High places*, where altars were erected for the worship of idols.

## THE ITINERARY OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

Moses kept this record of the marches and encampments of Israel "by the commandment of the Lord." There must, therefore, have been some good and sufficient reason for it. And it seems to us that it was intended for a memorial, which was calculated in many ways to benefit primarily the Israelites, but also all others who might make acquaintance with the history. It is probable that the history of every station and march had its suggestions for the instruction, or encouragement, or admonition of the people. Of many of these encampments we know nothing except the name; but of others we know something of the occurrences and events connected with them, and in these instances we shall endeavour to briefly point out their moral suggestions. The verses before us, which are the introduction to the record, lead us to consider its general uses, and these as suggested by the fact that it was commanded by God.

It was calculated to be useful as—

### I. An incentive to gratitude to God.

His goodness and mercy to the Israelites are manifest throughout the entire history. They are especially seen in His—

1. *Emancipating them from bondage in Egypt*. "With a strong hand the Lord brought them out of Egypt."

2. *Repeatedly delivering them from their enemies*. From the Egyptians at the Red Sea, the Amalekites at Rephidim, the Canaanites at Arad, &c.

3. *Infallibly guiding them in their journeys*. "In the day time He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." "He led them forth by the right way," &c. (a)

4. *Constantly providing for them in the desert*. "He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food; He sent them meat to the full. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like the sand of the sea." "He clave the rocks in the



wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths;" &c. (b)

5. *Inviolably guarding them from dangers.* Excepting on those occasions when they forfeited His protection by their aggravated offences, He shielded them from the perils both of the desert through which they passed and of the enemies whom they encountered. (c)

The record which, by suggestion, reminded them of so much goodness and mercy, was eminently adapted to inspire their warm and deep gratitude to Him from whom these blessings flowed. And can we survey the path of our pilgrimage without discovering many and cogent reasons for gratitude to God? "What shall I render unto the Lord?" &c. "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" &c. (d)

II. An encouragement to obey and trust God.

The history makes it clearly manifest that in obedience to the Divine will Israel realized peace, security, and prosperity. This was a reason for continued and complete obedience. And since God in His dealings with them had displayed so much kindness and wisdom, faithfulness and power, He had surely proved Himself to be worthy of their unlimited and hearty confidence. He is unchangeable; therefore His past doings are examples of what we may expect Him to do in the future. History, properly studied, will be the nurse of faith and hope (comp. Psa. lxxviii. 3-8). (e)

III. A monitor against sin.

Very impressively the history reveals—

1. *Man's proneness to sin.* The Israelites sinned at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 11, 12), in the wilderness of Sin (Exod. xvi. 2, 3), at Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 1-4), at Sinai (Exod. xxxii.), at Kibroth-hattaavah (chap. xi.), at Kadesh (chap. xiv.), &c. How sadly in human life to day is the history of Israel in this respect reproduced!

2. *God's antagonism against sin.* See this at Sinai, at Kibroth-hattaavah, at Kadesh, in the rebellion of Korah and his company (chap. xvi. 31-50), in the sin "in the matter of Peor" (chap. xxv. 1-9). God is the unrelenting foe of sin. (f)

3. *The great evil of sin.* This itinerary shows by intimation how it had cursed Israel. All their sorrows and afflictions had resulted from sin. Many of these stations would never have been visited but for their sins. More than thirty-seven years of their wanderings were caused by them. They had painfully proved that sin "is an evil thing and bitter" (comp. Jer. ii. 19). (g) All this was calculated to warn them against committing it. This use of history is distinctly mentioned in Psa. lxxviii. 9. And this, we think, was one of the ends why Moses was commanded to keep this diary of travel. Let the miseries which sin has caused us check every inclination to it. (h)

Conclusion.

Every man should remember his own history, and profit by his own experiences.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This point is illustrated on pp 152-154, 164

(b) Illustrations on the *Divine provision* are given on pp. 164, 189, 190, 202.

(c) The *Divine protection* is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 101, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 407, 416, 417.

(f) and (g) For illustrations on these points see p. 327.

(h) An illustration on *Discouragements to sin* is given on p. 288.

## MOSES'S DIARY OF TRAVELS, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 2.)

This chapter is a compilation from Moses's diary, recording the journeys on the way from Egypt to Canaan. The text tells us that God told Moses to keep this record, and to publish it. Human life is not to be forgotten; it is a thing of interest and moment to the person living it, and it is full of instruction to others observing it. God wished the people to remember these journeys; and He wishes all ages to know of them and to learn from them. Let us notice a few of the lessons God intends these journeys to teach us.

**I.** They impress upon us the great fact of God's continued presence and interest in human life.

As we read the incidents recorded of these journeys, we see God feeding, guiding, protecting the people. In the census taken at His command, we see that He knows every individual and keeps a record of every life. Then we see Him giving the people laws, sanitary and moral, tending to health and comfort, purity and holiness. These journeys show us that God knew all, was interested in all, and was the best Friend of all. He is still the same, &c.

**II.** They point out to us that God is the one safe and true Guide through life.

The people in the wilderness were ignorant of the way, exposed to many dangers, and quite helpless in themselves. These journeys show that God with them was more than equal to all emergencies. They prove that while they trusted God, they were never in want; while they followed Him, they never missed the way; and while they obeyed Him, they never suffered harm. To us, as to them, the journey of life is a perilous one: the way is unknown to us, and we need a guide. Let the record of these journeys commend to us Israel's Guide. He knows the way; He never errs; He can ever protect; He is one we can wholly trust; and He is willing to be our Guide.

**III.** They present to us a picture of human life, and thus tend to give us correct views of life.

What is life as seen from these records? A pilgrimage of varied and chequered experiences. In no place had they a "continuing city"; and in their mysterious wanderings to and fro, they met with all kinds of experiences. They were constantly finding fault with God; and yet He was leading them in a straight, the best way. Such is life to us all; and it is well for us to know it, so as to have right views of life. "Here have we no continuing city;" this is not our rest. God is often leading us in a way which is mysterious to us; His paths are to us often in the deep waters; and we are often perplexed. But let us look at these journeys. He is ever doing right—doing all things well. And the way He leads His people now, as then, is the best way to rest. As in these journeys so in our life; we have Marah and Elim, storm and calm, trouble and comfort; and let us not forget that God led the people to both. Let none then build their hopes on the earth; let none despair in passing through trials and afflictions. Our life here is a mingled one.

"Bits of gladness and of sorrow,  
Strangely crossed and interlaid:

Days of fever and of fretting,  
Hours of kind and blessed calm.

Tears of parting, smiles of meeting;  
Paths of smooth and rugged life.

Such are our annals upon earth,  
Our tale from very hour of birth,  
The soul's true history.—*Bonar.*

**IV.** They show to us that the greatest evils of life and its only dangers come from sin.

Journeying through this world cannot be all pleasant. In the nature of things, trials and troubles must and do come; for we are in an enemy's land,

we are passing through a course of discipline, &c. But the greatest evils and the only dangers of life come from sin. Look at these journeys. Nothing really injures man but sin. God led the people to the Red Sea, to Marah, to the wilderness, &c.; it was often trying to them; but God never failed them; He was equal to all; they lost not a man; they wanted nothing while they were faithful to Him. Invariably we find that sin was their curse. So with us. There is nothing to *fear* in poverty, illness, death, &c. They are hard to bear; we need patience under them; but they cannot *hurt* us. Yea! God can turn them into blessings for us. But as for sin, it is ever a curse, and nothing but a curse; it ruins body and soul; injures us for time and eternity. Yet people love sin, &c.

O that all such would read the record of these journeys! &c.

V. They suggest the comforting thought that by trusting in God and following Him we are sure to possess the inheritance which He has promised to His people.

Difficulties, trials, opposition are met on the way to heaven; but following after God, we shall safely reach the "good land beyond Jordan," as did the people the record of whose journeys God commanded Moses to write.

We are all journeying through life; soon, soon the journey will end. Let each ask himself, Whither am I going? Who is my guide? What will the end be? And let these journeys of Israel urge us all to seek for Israel's God.—  
*David Lloyd.*

#### THE DEPARTURE FROM THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.

(Verses 3, 4.)

Concerning the departure of Israel from Egypt, the text sets forth the following facts—

I. Their departure succeeded the observance of a significant and sacred memorial.

"They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow after the Passover." See pp. 139-141.

Learn: *The importance of commemorating the Divine mercies to us.* Such commemorations tend to foster our gratitude to God, to encourage our confidence in Him, &c. (a)

II. Their departure was public and triumphant.

"The children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

1. *It was public.* "In the sight of all the Egyptians." There was nothing clandestine or ignominious in the way in which they left the land of their oppressors (comp. Isa. lii. 12).

2. *It was triumphant.* "With an high hand." God had displayed a

little of the awful might of His strong right hand to the Egyptians. He effected the deliverance of Israel, &c.

Learn: *The certainty of the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, and the fulfilment of the Divine promises.* Notwithstanding the most powerful and persistent opposition, He carries forward His plans to triumphant issues. A reason for trusting Him, &c. (b)

III. Their departure took place when their oppressors were engaged in the most mournful occupation.

"For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them." How deep and keen must have been the anguish of the Egyptians! The sorrow of "one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," is spoken of in the sacred Scriptures as the most sharp and sore. And how universal was this sorrow! "There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

Learn: *The greatest sorrows are the result of our sins.* The anguish of the Egyptians arose from their oppression



and cruelty to the Israelites, and their persistent refusal to comply with the demand of God, and let them go. Shun sin, &c. (c)

IV. Their departure had been brought about by the most awful displays of the Divine judgments.

"All their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments."

1. *On the Egyptians.* "The whole kingdom of Egypt," says Dean Milman, "had been laid waste by successive calamities: the cruelty of the oppressors had been dreadfully avenged; all classes had suffered in the indiscriminating desolation. Their pride had been humbled; their most sacred prejudices wounded; the Nile had been contaminated; their dwellings polluted by loathsome reptiles; their cleanly persons defiled by vermin; their pure air had swarmed with troublesome insects; their cattle had perished by a dreadful malady; their bodies broken out with a filthy disease; their early harvests had been destroyed by the hail, the later by the locusts; an awful darkness had enveloped them for three days;" and, finally, they were smitten with a calamity more dreadful than all these, the instant death of all their firstborn, both of man and cattle.

2. *On their idols.* "Upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments." The meaning of this clause is very doubtful. From the fact that the words are here connected with the burying of

the firstborn, "it has been supposed," says Dean Alford, "that the destruction of the firstborn is meant by the phrase, seeing that among them would be many animals worshipped by the Egyptians. Calvin supposes that the judgment would consist in the demonstration of the worthlessness of the help and guardianship of Egypt's gods. But it must be confessed that both these explanations fall short of any satisfactory elucidation of the words. The Pseudo Jonathan gives a perhaps more likely interpretation, when he refers it to a destruction of the images of Egypt's gods: 'The molten images shall liquefy, those of stone shall be smitten in pieces, those of earth be broken up, those of wood shall be burnt to ashes' (comp. 1 Sam. v. 3, f.). We have very similar denunciations in Isa. xix. 1; Jer. xliii. 13; xli. 25; Ezek. xxx. 13, in three of which places is a distinct reference to the destruction of the images. But if this is meant, there is, of course, far more beneath it: the gods of Egypt are demoniac powers, and Jehovah's discomfiture of them, beginning with the failure of the magicians, was consummated" in the destruction of the firstborn.

Learn: *The utter folly of any creature opposing himself to God.* "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (d)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 460.

(c) Illustrations on this point are given on pp. 97, 258, 327.

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 252, 312.

### SUCCOTH AND ETHAM: THE DETERMINATION OF THE ROUTE.

(Verses 5 and 6.)

"Succoth, their first station, seems to have been the general rendezvous after their hasty flight, and from thence

their journey proper began." Here various Divine instructions seem to have been given to the Israelites, the

consideration of which is beyond the scope of our work. There is, however, one question connected with the encampment at Succoth, which cannot be overlooked in any satisfactory treatment of this itinerary, viz., the determination of the route to be pursued; for it is in the account of their brief stay here that we first read of that route. From Succoth to Palestine, through the land of the Philistines, the usual caravan way, is comparatively a short journey. "From Rameses to Gaza," says Kalisch, "is a straight and much frequented way of eight or ten days, either northwards, through the pass of Djebel-el-Tih, or more eastwards, through that of Djebel-el-Edshmeb; and the sons of Jacob journeyed, in not many days, from Palestine to Egypt to buy corn." Why then were the Israelites led by the long and trying "way of the wilderness of the Red Sea"? The answer is given in Exod. xiii. 17.

The following homiletic sketch on the determination upon this route as illustrating *The tender consideration of God for His people* is taken from *Buddicom's Christian Exodus*.

The Christian life is a growth, and if assailed by some temptations in its infancy, the consequences might be fatal. He, therefore, who commences and maintains the process of our salvation, gradually accustoms His soldiers and servants to the difficulties of their warfare. Their faith, love, zeal, and self-denial are thus *exercised* rather than *oppressed*.

### I. The circumstances of the Israelites.

They had been redeemed from bondage. They were commencing their journey to the Promised Land, every spirit filled with pleasure. They were confident of their power to endure the trials of the way. The heart-searching God knew their deficiencies; and a variety of circumstances connected with their feeble faith determined Him in wisdom to divert their feet towards Canaan by a devious path.

1. *The Philistines, who lay between them and the promised inheritance, were*

*a brave and warlike people, against whom the sons of Jacob, numerous as they were, could not hope to succeed in battle.* Wisely, therefore, did the Lord judge that they would shrink from such enemies. Such are the Christian's foes. Satan has triumphed over man in every age. And thinkest thou, Christian, that the enemies of the soul are enfeebled? What, then, would be the consequences if God led thee past them to Canaan? Wisely and graciously are you led by the wilderness.

2. *The Israelites were unarmed, and therefore utterly unable to cope with the Philistines, who were prepared with every means of offence and defence which a people whose delight was in war could invent.* The young believer just escaped from the house of bondage is defenceless. His enemies are armed. He cannot expect to wield the sword of the Spirit with the full energy of one who has been accustomed to fight with it.

3. *In thus estimating the goodness of God towards the children of Israel, we must add that their spirits were bowed down by long captivity.* The hard bondage in mortar and brick was not the school in which to learn courage. Hence Israel was not fitted to match against the free soldiers of Philistia. The slavery of Satan unfits for conflict with the foes of the soul.

### II. The dealing of God towards them.

God might have made Israel at peace with the Philistines; or have given them courage to defeat their foes. But this would have comprehended less of moral discipline.

1. *He avoided the nearest way to the Promised Land, and led them by the way of the wilderness.* The Israelites would be astonished at the line of march; they would be disposed to murmur. Has not God often contradicted your desires? The passenger ignorant of navigation cannot direct the course of the ship. The ship-master knows the rocks: God knows our path best.

2. *He saw fit that they should pass*

through the dangers of the Red Sea, and sojourn in the wilderness of Sin. Could this be the result of wisdom? "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." It is the exclusive province of unerring wisdom to draw an exact line between the discipline necessary for our moral good, and that severity of affliction which might overwhelm us. We

must confide in our Heavenly Father.

3. *Although the journey of the Israelites was contrary to their expectations, their wishes, and their clouded judgment, it was the safest and the best path to Canaan.* "He led them forth by the right way." Let us learn, then, to leave the choice of our course simply and solely to God.

## PI-HAHIROTH; OR, STANDING STILL IN THE MIDST OF DANGER.

(Verse 7.)

Departing from Etham, "on a sudden," to quote the words of Dean Milman, "the march of the Israelites is altered; instead of pressing rapidly onwards, keeping the sea on their right hand, and so heading the gulf, they strike to the south, with the sea on their left, and deliberately encamp at no great distance from the shore, at a place called Pi-hahiroth. The king, recovered from his panic, and receiving intelligence that the Israelites had no thought of return, determined on pursuit: intelligence of this false movement, or at least of this unnecessary delay on the part of the Israelites, encouraged his hopes of vengeance. The great caste of the warriors, the second in dignity, were regularly quartered in certain cities on the different frontiers of the kingdom, so that a considerable force could be mustered on any emergency. With great rapidity he drew together 600 war chariots, and a multitude of others, with their full equipment of officers. In the utmost dismay the Israelites beheld the plain behind them glittering with the hostile array; before them lay the sea; on the right, impracticable passes. Resistance does not seem to have entered their thoughts; they were utterly ignorant of military discipline, perhaps unarmed, and encumbered with their families, and their flocks and herds. 'Because there were no graves in Egypt,' they exclaimed, in the bitterness of their despair, 'hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness!'

Their leader alone preserved his calmness and self-possession."

Let us fix upon some of his remarkable words to them as suggesting instructive and helpful considerations: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day" (Exod. xiv. 13). Consider—

I. The deplorable effect of slavery upon the Israelites.

This, the first peril which they encountered, revealed their almost utter destitution of manliness. Notice—

1. *Their cowardice.* Soon as they saw the advancing hosts of Pharaoh "they were sore afraid." They were in great consternation, prepared for anything mean and unmanly; totally unprepared for anything noble or brave.

2. *Their faithlessness.* All the signs and wonders of the Divine Hand wrought on their behalf are lost sight of by reason of their present difficulty and danger.

3. *Their ingratitude.* How disgracefully they reproached Moses! "Because there were no graves in Egypt," &c. What a base return for all his disinterested and noble efforts on their behalf! They go so far as to *apostatise* in spirit. "Better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." A man would have said: "Better death than slavery; better anything than to again bow our neck beneath the yoke of the oppressor. When freedom and honour are no more,



life is not desirable." But slavery had crushed the manhood out of them. The degradation of their position had done its mischievous work by degrading themselves, and reducing them in spirit to mere serfs. In estimating their conduct, we must thus take into account their previous disadvantages and sufferings. And this principle should be observed in analogous cases in our own day. Apply it in the case of the *reclaimed drunkard*. It is unreasonable to complain because he is not at once a man of refinement, &c. It will take years to repair the waste and injury of the years of intemperance. Let us be thankful for the transformation of the drunkard into a sober man, and wait with patience for the exhibition of the characteristics of a noble manhood. Apply it to the *spiritual life*. After we are delivered from the bondage of sin, we shall often discover evil results of our former life clinging to us, and retarding our progress. The strength and courage of mature Christian manhood are not attained at once. Sainthood is a growth. Let us patiently and hopefully persevere, &c.

## II. The distinguished heroism of Moses.

Amid all the excitement, danger, alarm, and reproaches of the people, Moses was sublimely calm and magnanimous. He uttered no reproach to his craven-hearted followers; but addressed to them words of lofty inspiration and encouragement. "Fear ye not, stand still," &c. The crisis that revealed the mean cowardice and base ingratitude of his followers, revealed also the noble generosity and triumphant heroism of the leader. That which brought out their want of faith in God, also brought out the strength and firmness of his faith in Him.

## III. The remarkable exhortation of Moses.

"Fear ye not, stand still," &c. This exhortation warrants the inference, that *there are times when our highest wisdom is to "stand still" and wait the Divine directions; when the best thing we can do is to do nothing but look to God to indi-*

*cate our course.* We do not counsel indolence either in temporal or spiritual things. There can be no progress without effort; or attainment without industry; or conquest without conflict. Yet there are seasons in life when it is the part of the wise man and the Christian not to exhaust himself in fruitless efforts, but to "stand still" and wait with all possible calmness for the interposition of God. When we have done all that we can do, and can do no more, and yet the end is not attained, we are not extricated from our difficulties, it is wise in us not to exhaust ourselves in frantic cries and efforts which merely beat the air, but to wait until God shall appear for our help. (a) This principle is applicable to—

1. *Our personal salvation.* We are commanded to "work out our own salvation;" and only by patient and earnest effort can we advance in the Christian life. But there is a very important part of our salvation in which we can do nothing but "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Thus it is in relation to our acceptance with God. Our part in this is not to endeavour to commend ourselves to His favour, or strive to justify ourselves before Him, or labour to merit His grace. Our part is to accept His grace, to leave ourselves to His mercy, to receive Christ as our Saviour, to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

2. *The exigencies of life.* There are seasons when we find human and earthly resources utterly inadequate to our need. There are burdens which no human friend can help us to bear; difficulties from which no human skill can extricate us; crises in which we are thrown either into unmanly, enforced submission, or into the frenzies of despair, or upon the help of God. In these crises let us "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;" let us hopefully appeal to Heaven for help. Thus did David (Psa. lx. 11; cxlii. 4, 5). We are exhorted in the Scriptures to do so (Psa. xlv. 10; Isa. xxx. 7, 15). (b) Nor is it less brave, at such times,

to "stand still" and wait the help of God. The coward may struggle frantically in the terrible crises of life; but only the heroic can wait the time when action is serviceable, and wait that time calmly. To stand still in the moment of supreme anxiety, and wisely estimate our resources and scan our prospects, and determine the best mode and time for action, and cast ourselves upon

God—this demands a brave man, and one whose courage springs from faith. There are times when it is more heroic to "stand still" than to fight, and crises when it is wiser to wait than to work. (c)

The great lesson of our subject is this, *trust in God*. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," &c.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) One of our hardest lessons is to find out the wisdom of our hindrances; how we are to be put forward and upward by being put back and put down; encouraged by being rebuked; prospered by being baffled. When the company in the "Pilgrim's Progress" had to sit up watching all night at the house of Gaius, Greatheart kept them awake with this riddle, "He that would kill must first be overcome"; and the truth in it has been practically dug out, by trials that broke sleep, through many a hard fortune, in every Christian experience since. It needs wakeful watchers, spiritual eyesight, to read that riddle of life, how defeat helps progress; how a compulsory standing still speeds us on; how humiliation exalts; how putting a cross on the shoulders lightens the burden of the race. But Christ has solved the wonder of His own cross, humbling Himself, becoming obedient unto death, and in His humiliation having His judgment taken away.

Gradually, to believing eyes, the fact comes out. Standing still at the right time, in the right way, for the right purpose, is the surest advance. Waiting on God brings us to our journey's end faster than our feet. The failure of our favourite plans is often the richest success of the soul. Let the pressure of trouble drive you down from your heights of health and pride, and you will come upon the primary foundation, and grow strong out of the rock. Be exiled from the convivial fellowships of comfort and popularity, and you make new acquaintances with stronger friends, —Christian self-possession, and wholesome repentance, and a mastery of your moral forces, and faith in your Lord.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) In the midst of our own houses, there are more secret sorrows than I need to name. Every life has its own. Perhaps there are erring, ungrateful, and ungracious children, with parents' hearts breaking and bleeding over them, and agonizing in daily prayers for their return. "Have faith in God;" every prayer pierces the Heaven of heavens; the Intercessor and Mediator pleads with it; and its answer is committed to some strong angels

at the right hand of the Throne. There are anxieties, alienations, unavailing affections, crossed desires and hopes. There are memories running back from pews in this house of prayer to the graves of those that worship no more in earthly temples. Rest, mourners, in the Lord. Seek not the living among the dead. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all else shall be added. "Let us be still beneath God's hand; for though His hand be heavy upon us, it is strong and safe beneath us too; and none can pluck us out of His hand." O, impatient griefs, and sorrows that have no hope, be still; and ye hopes that would outrun the wisdom of a healing Providence and a saving Mercy, be still; all unreasonable and rebellious thoughts, be still; know that the Lord, He is God. Remember that "the darkness is God's as well as the light"; and "if we cannot walk" and work therein, "we can" at least kneel down and "pray."—*Ibid.*

(c) If we learn to measure the bravery of Christian acquirements rather by the inward effort they cost than by their display, if we estimate character more by the standard of Christ's beatitudes than by what we short-sightedly call "results," we shall find some of the sublimest fruits of faith among what are commonly called passive virtues: in the silent endurance that hides under the shadow of great afflictions; in the quiet loveliness of that forbearance which "suffereth long and is kind"; in the charity which is "not easily provoked"; in the forgiveness which can be buffeted for doing well and "take it patiently"; in the smile on the face of diseased and suffering persons, a transfiguration of the tortured features of pain brightening sick rooms more than the sun; in the unostentatious heroism of the household, amidst the daily dripping of small cares; in the noiseless conquests of a love too reverent to complain; in resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for Him. Have you yourself never known the time when you found it a harder lesson to learn how to be still in your room than to be busy in the world? Of masculine natures that is apt to be the special cross. And so that may

be the point where faith and virtue need to rally their strength, if you would be a triumphant disciple. It is a fact which not all of us may have noticed, that of the nine beatitudes of our Lord, all, unless it be one, pronounce their blessing on what the world would

call tame and passive traits, from "the poor in spirit," to those who are reviled and persecuted without revenge. So does Christianity turn upside down the vulgar vanity of our ambition, and empty our worldliness of blessedness.—*Ibid.*

### PI-HAHIROTH; OR, ▲ LONG SEPARATION.

(Verse 7.)

There are other remarkable words of Moses, spoken at this station, which we shall do well to consider before we pass on. Having uttered the words which we have already noticed, he said: "For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exod. xiv. 13). In these words we have an illustration of—

#### I. The triumphant faith of Moses.

It rose superior to difficulties and dangers; the abject terror of his followers could not diminish its vitality or vigour; the almost desperate aspect of affairs could not overcome it; it was splendidly victorious over all. Let us emulate Moses in this respect.

#### II. The suicidal hardihood of the wicked.

Most terrible was the development of Pharaoh's character. His resistance of the Divine commands although they were authenticated by the most striking and dreadful signs; and his hardening of himself in rebellion against God—how appalling are these! Madly he rushed into ruin; blindly he courted destruction. His is a typical case. Sin seems to infatuate men—drives them mad. Spiritually, men are their own executioners; they of their own accord rush into the sea that engulfs them. Sin is madness. The persistent sinner is beside himself.

#### III. The working of God in history.

1. *Delivering the oppressed.* The Israelites had long cried unto Him; and the only result seemed to be that their position became worse. As we reckon time, His interposition was long delayed. Does God hear? Does He judge amongst men? Yes. "He

sitteth in the throne judging right." "He will avenge His own elect," &c.

2. *Retributing the oppressor.* Long time had God borne with Pharaoh; but at length His forbearance ceases and He visits him in judgment. "Because sentence against an evil work," &c. (Eccles. viii. 11). "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21). "Thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii. 3-6). "He that being often reprov'd," &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

3. *Developing in all His own wonderful purposes.* Consider these Israelites,—they were cowardly, ungrateful, preferring to return into slavery than to die fighting for freedom. How unlikely that they should ever become a truly great nation! How unlikely that through them should come to the human race the greatest blessings! the clear revelation of the will and purpose of God, and the Redeemer of men! How unlikely! Yet such was God's purpose; towards its accomplishment these events were tending; and in due season it was realized. History should be studied reverently, for God is working in it. In all and by all He is developing His own glorious plans.

#### IV. Separations which are taking place amongst men in the present

1. *There are many persons whom having seen them once we "shall see them again no more for ever."* In the thronged thoroughfare, in the railway carriage, at the summer retreat, we see many persons once, and never more in this life. Join to this the fact that we may influence them by act, or word, or look; and how solemn is the con-



sideration! What an argument for a true life at all times!

2. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same circumstances.* We meet them again; but, so changeful are all things here that, the surroundings of their life are altered. The poor have become prosperous; the prosperous, impoverished; the distressed have become happy, and the happy, miserable, &c. This changefulness makes many a separation very anxious. We ask,—“Shall we meet again as well and as happy?” &c.

3. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same character.* We part from a person who is ungodly and

profane; years roll away, and we meet him a reverent and religious man. A youth leaves home reckless and wild; he returns a thoughtful and earnest man. A young man or woman leaves home comparatively innocent and pure; but the man returns with a blasted character, and the woman a moral wreck. This is the most separating separation. Separation of time, or space, or even of world, does not so painfully separate as division of character.

V. The great separation which will take place amongst men in the future.

See Matt. xiii. 30, 39-43; xxv. 31-46.

In that great final separation, where shall we be found?

## PI-HAHIROTH; OR, GOING FORWARD IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES.

(Verse 7.)

The time for standing still and waiting was soon at an end. Moses sought direction from God; and at once received the Divine answer: “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. xiv. 15).

It must have seemed strange to the Israelites to be commanded to advance. To “go forward” seemed like rushing from one difficulty into another. Pharaoh and his army were an alarming danger behind them; before them the sea appeared a danger no less to be dreaded. Yet the order was, “Go forward.” Notwithstanding the threatening sea, they were to advance. We regard this as an illustration of *Christian Progress in the Face of Difficulties*. It is an established fact of the Christian life, that God calls us to advancement though there are immense difficulties in our path. He commands us to “Go forward” in despite of dangers which appear inevitable and fatal.

I. In the Christian life advancement is demanded.

Progress is a great law of the universe. In nature all things move onward. Winds, and streams, and stars,

are ever advancing. The history of science, philosophy, and art, is a record of progress. The Religion of Jesus Christ also has advanced and grown constantly. Progress is a law of all life. Where progress ends decay begins. So in the spiritual life the command is, forward, upward, heavenward, Godward. Continuance in the same condition is impossible. Advancement to higher attainments, and nobler developments, and more perfect conditions of being, is ever demanded of us. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” “Grow in grace,” &c. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,” &c. (2 Peter i. 5-7). “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” “Go forward.” (a)

II. In the Christian life advancement is demanded with a full recognition of the obstacles in the way of it.

He who commanded the Israelites to “go forward” was perfectly acquainted with the sea which rolled forbiddingly before them, and all the succeeding

difficulties which awaited them; yet He gave the order to advance. He does likewise in the Christian life. He hath forewarned us "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Yet He ever summons us to advance, ever calls us to ascend. The path of Christian progress is seldom an easy one. Dangers and difficulties are numerous. We pass from conquest to renew the conflict. We throw one foe and advance to engage another. We surmount one difficulty, and another challenges us to effort. Yet knowing all these things, the Lord says, "Go forward." (b)

III. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, may be surmounted.

In ordinary life we frequently witness proofs of this principle. Man, by the force of a sound and active understanding, and iron will, and persistent effort, is constantly removing mountains, accomplishing that which is pronounced impossible.

"Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,  
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,  
And breasts the blows of circumstance,  
And grapples with his evil star,"

he can do wonders—almost "all things are possible to him." Let the same mind and will and activity be under the guidance of God, and nerved by faith in Him, and difficulties shall melt away before them. "All things are possible to him that believeth." "Faith laughs at impossibilities." The Israelites moved forward at the command of God; and before the majesty of such reliant obedience, the sea parted. The difficulty vanished in the presence of believing obedience. When God saith, "Go forward," though it be towards the deep sea or trackless mountain, let us advance, and some unseen path will open before us, or the waters will divide at our feet.

"Dark and wide the sea appears,  
Every soul is full of fears,  
Yet the word is onward still,  
Onward move and do His will;  
And the great deep shall discover  
God's highway to take thee over." (c)

IV. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, contribute to our advancement.

Obstacles are disciplinary. Every difficulty that has vanished before the obedience of faith is an argument for future and greater reliance. Every conflict, courageously entered upon and continued, must end in conquest; and every conquest fits us for more severe conflicts, and makes our final victory more sure. Through the grace of God, difficulties, dangers, and foes, are all contributing to our progress. (d)

V. In the Christian life we are incited to progress, notwithstanding obstacles, by a host of encouragements.

Here are some of our encouragements.

1. *Believing prayer is mighty with God.* Moses cried unto the Lord; and the Lord responded to his prayer by dividing the sea. He still attends to the requests of men. (e)

2. *Glorious examples incite us onward.* Think of Paul: "I count not myself to have apprehended," &c. And later in life: "I have fought a good fight," &c. Think of that glorious and ever-increasing multitude who by faith have triumphed over all hindrances, perils, and adversaries. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience," &c. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about," &c.

3. *The character of our great Leader encourages us forward.* His path has been one of splendid victories; His career one of constantly increasing glory. He is equal to every emergency. With Jesus at our head we need not fear to advance.

What earnest voices unite in urging us to "Go forward"! Voices of the glorified urge us onward. They who have passed from the semblances of time to the realities of eternity call upon us to advance. The rest that awaits us invites us forward. We do not pine for our rest before God wills it. We long for no inglorious rest. We are thankful rather for the invaluable training of difficulty, the loving discipline of danger and strife. Yet in the midst

of it all, the prospect of rest attracts us heavenward. Through all, and above all, God cries, "Go forward;" "Come up hither."

"Forward! be our watchword,  
Step; and voices joined;  
Seek the things before us,  
Not a look behind:

Burns the fiery pillar  
At our army's head;  
Who shall dream of shrinking,  
By our Cap ain led?  
Forward through the desert,  
Through the toil and fight:  
Canaan lies before us,  
Zion beams with light."—*Alford*.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Certainly advance is the great law of the Christian life, as well as of the universe. All things in nature and history go forward. The stream moves forward, not a wave of it turns back, its every eddy even is, in reality, advancing. The winds move forward, pausing, indeed, often on their journey, lingering amidst the locks of the pine or in the cleft of the rock, but speedily resuming their onward sweep again. The stars—the earth included—move forward, "hasting not, resting not," seeking, it is said, some distant centre. How we saw the comet of 1858 shooting like an arrow towards its broad target, the sun! Science, art, philosophy, literature, every species of knowledge, move forward; invention following invention—discovery, discovery; one man of genius eclipsing another, to be in his turn outshone. Time moves forward—oh, how rapidly! and how his vast wings seem to say as they rush along, "I have an engagement at the judgment-seat. I have an appointment in eternity, and I must fulfil it. My 'King's business requireth haste.'" Christ Himself never rested. He was never in a hurry, but He was always in haste. The difference between Him and many of His people is, His life was short, and He knew it, and did the most in it; theirs, too, is short, but they know it not, and do not with their might what their hand findeth to do. God Himself even, with all the leisure of eternity, is not losing an hour, but is carrying on His broad plans with undeviating regularity and increasing swiftness, and surely men should aspire in this respect to be imitators of, and fellow-workers with, God. Christ's religion, too, has been active and progressive; sometimes frozen up for a time like a river, but, like a river, working under the ice, and when spring arrived, making up for the time lost by the increased rapidity of its course. And so with the path of the individual; like the river, the winds, the stars, the Eternal Himself, it must advance. Our motto

should be "Excelsior."—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) The progress of the Christian is often from one difficulty to another, and very idle for him, in this earth, to expect an unvaried course of even moderate peace and happiness. He only exchanges one difficulty for another. After old obstacles are surmounted, new ones are sure to arise. The children of Israel probably thought they had buried all their difficulties in that ocean. And how loud and bold rung their psalm, as if it were a challenge to the wilderness, on the verge of which they stood. But the wilderness accepted the challenge, and what with thirst, hunger, wild beasts, and, at last, Divinely-appointed death, it engulfed almost all that multitude which had shouted for victory on the shore of the Red Sea. And so with the desert of this world. The Slough of Despond is exchanged for the Hill Difficulty, and that for the Castle of Giant Despair. We disguise not the pleasures of the wilderness, its wells, harbours, angels, Delectable Mountains, but notwithstanding all this, it is a wilderness at the best, and grows often more dreary the longer we pursue our path.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 393 (a).

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 393, 394.

(e) Beloved, if you can conceive of an age that is worse than another, so much the more is it a fit platform for the heavenly energy; the more difficulty, the more room for omnipotence to show itself; there is elbow-room for the great God when there is some great thing in the way, and some great difficulty that He may overturn. When there is a mountain to be cast into the valley, then there is almighty work to be done; and our covenant God only needs to see work to do for His praying people, and He will shortly do it.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

Illustrations on the *Power of Prayer* appear on pp. 183, 225.

### THE DIVIDING OF THE RED SEA.

(Verse 8.)

"And they departed from before Pi-hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness."

P P

I. This dividing of the sea was miraculous.

1. Because it took place, and the

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waters closed again, upon the outstretching of the hand of Moses, and in fulfilment of his word (Exod. xiv. 13). The sea is less manageable by man, perhaps, than any other force of nature. "The sea is God's, and He made it" (Psa. xcv. 5), and to Him only will it render obedience. The obedience in this case to Moses was, therefore, the result of a supernatural interposition. (a)

2. *Because the waters stood upright on either side of the path.* When waves roll back and leave their bed dry for a short space of time, they break, and return again; a strong wind would drive back the water on one side only and leave the water perhaps knee-deep or ankle-deep, but the wall of water on either side, and the dry land in the middle, could have been produced by miraculous power alone.

II. The fact of the miracle is proved by the present existence of the nation which was that day born.

No nation in the world, except the Hebrew, can point to the place and the day on which it began its national existence. All other ancient nations have lost their identity, but the Jews retain theirs, and the miracle of the Red Sea has always been the foundation fact of their history (Isa. lxiii. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 12, &c.).

#### Lessons.

i. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than physical convenience.* The Israelites could have entered Canaan by a much nearer way than through the Red Sea, but that way was chosen for them to teach them many important truths in connection

with God. The shortest way to attain an end is not always the best way. A short way to a fortune may not be so conducive to the formation of a worthy character as one which it takes much longer to travel. This truth is taught in the temptation of our Saviour (Luke iv. 5-8). Satan proposed a short way to that universal dominion, which our Lord knew could only be safely and truly attained through Gethsemane and Calvary.

ii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the uninterrupted operation of the ordinary laws of nature.* This is not at all surprising. The laws of nature are God's servants, and it is only reasonable to expect that, when He can reveal His power and mercy better by suspending their action, and operating, as it were, upon the forces of the world, without their instrumentality, He should do so. When the special end is accomplished they return to their wonted service. They have kept the bed of the Red Sea covered ever since the day when the waters closed over Pharaoh and his hosts.

iii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the preservation of bodily life.* This is an acknowledged fact. The life of a rebel is considered of less importance than the upholding of the law that condemns him to death. The lives of many men are oftentimes considered of less importance than the establishment and upholding of freedom, and the downfall of that which degrades the higher life of the human race and prevents its development.—*W. Harris.*

#### ILLUSTRATION.

(a) On a sudden Moses advances towards the sea, extends his rod, and a violent wind from the east begins to blow. The waters recede on both sides, a way appears; at night-fall, probably about eight o'clock, the caravan begins to defile along this awful pass. The wind continued in the same quarter all the night; but immediately they had passed over, and while the Egyptians, madly plunging after them, were in the middle of the passage, the wind suddenly fell, the waters rushed

back into their bed, the heavy chariot-wheels of the pursuers sank into the sand, broke and overthrew the chariots, and in this state of confusion the sea swept over the whole host, and overwhelmed the king and all the flower of the Egyptian army.

Such is the narrative in the book of Exodus, which writers of all ages have examined, and, according to the bias of their minds, have acknowledged or denied the miraculous agency, increased or diminished its extent.

At an early period, historians (particularly in Egypt), hostile to the Jews, asserted that Moses, well acquainted with the tides of the Red Sea, took advantage of the ebb, and passed over his army, while the incautious Egyptians, attempting to follow, were surprised by the flood, and perished. Yet, after every concession, it seems quite evident that, without one particular wind, the ebb tide, even in the narrowest part of the channel, could not be kept back long enough to allow a number of people to cross in safety. We have, then, the alternative of supposing, that a man of the consummate prudence and sagacity, and the local knowledge, attributed to Moses, altered, suspended, or at least did not hasten his march, and thus deliberately involved the people, whom he had rescued at so much pains and risk, in the danger of being overtaken by the enemy, led back as slaves, or massacred, on the chance that an unusually strong wind would blow at a particular hour, for a given time, so as to keep back the flood, then die away, and allow the tide to return at the precise instant when the Egyptians were in the middle of their passage. . . .

Wherever the passage was effected, the Mosaic account cannot, by any fair interpretation, be made consistent with the exclusion of preternatural agency. Not to urge the

literal meaning of the waters being a wall on the right hand and on the left, as if they had stood up sheer and abrupt, and then fallen back again,—the Israelites passed through the sea with deep water on both sides; and any ford between two bodies of water must have been passable only for a few people at one precise point of time. All comparisons, therefore, to marches like that of Alexander, cited by Josephus idly, and in his worst spirit of compromise, are entirely inapplicable. That bold general took the opportunity of the receding tide to conduct his army round a bluff headland in Pamphylia, called Climax, where, during high water, there was no beach between the cliffs and the sea. But what would this, or any other equally daring measures in the history of war, be to the generalship of Moses, who must thus have decoyed his enemy to pursue him to the banks of the sea, and so nicely calculated the time, that the lowest ebb should be exactly at the hour of his greatest danger, while the whole of the pursuing army should be so infatuated, and so ignorant of the tides, as to follow them without any apprehension of the returning flood? In this case Moses would appear as formidable a rival to the military fame of Alexander, as to the legislative wisdom of Solon or Lycurgus. —H. H. Milman, D.D.

## MARAH; OR, ASPECTS OF THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

### (Verse 8.)

“And they went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.”

Human life in this world is a journey, which begins at birth and ends at death. Certain aspects of this journey are brought before us by the journey of the Israelites from the Red Sea to Marah, and their life at Marah.

#### I. The privations of this journey.

“They went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham.” And we learn from Exod. xv. 22, that during those days they “found no water.” We have already briefly treated this topic on p. 366. (a)

#### II. The disappointments of our journey.

“And pitched in Marah.” “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” How intensely

painful must their disappointment have been! (b)

An illustration of some experiences in our own life. We have looked upon some thing or some position, and have felt and said to ourselves: “When I attain that I shall be satisfied and happy.” We have attained it, and found it unsatisfactory and bitter. Napoleon III., when an exile, deemed the throne to be all he needed to secure his happiness. He attained it; and in a few years he confessed: “In changing my destiny, I have but changed my joys and sorrows. Formerly I bore the afflictions of exile; now I have to sustain the cares of power.” One has looked at *wealth* as the one thing needful to his happiness; secured it; and been filled with bitter disappointment. Another has so judged concerning *leisure*, and attained it, with a similar result. Many have

thus estimated *married life and offspring*. Countless mothers, on the birth of their first son, have said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." But how often, like Cain, has he wrung that mother's heart with anguish! How often has a father's beloved turned out a second Absalom! We have looked upon many things as the pleasant fruit of our life; grasped them; and discovered a foul worm at the core. God disappoints us with the waters of Marah in order to lead us to Him who can make them sweet. When we over-estimate things and creatures, He has ordered that they shall disappoint us in order to lead us to Him who can fully meet our highest and vastest expectation.

### III. The sins of our journey.

When the Israelites found that they could not drink the waters of Marah, they "murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Notice—

1. *Their unreasonableness and ingratitude towards Moses*. Why murmur against him? Was he responsible for the lack of drinkable water? Could he make the bitter water sweet? Their murmurings were childish. Moreover, he had been their benefactor. He had dared and sacrificed bravely for them. How ungrateful, then, was their conduct towards him!

2. *Their unbelief and ingratitude to God*. They had soon forgotten practically their deliverance from Egypt and their passage through the Red Sea. Three days ago they were singing the song of victory; to-day they are murmuring. Past interpositions of God on their behalf should have inspired present confidence in Him. Gratitude should have precluded murmuring. We also are prone to sin in like manner in our life-journey; to overlook past deliverances in present dangers; to fret and murmur at the inconveniences and trials of the way; to be unbelieving and ungrateful, &c. (c)

### IV. The all-sufficient Resource of our journey.

In answer to the prayer of Moses God made the bitter waters sweet for

them (Exod. xv. 25). He is our Resource, and he is—

1. *All-sufficient*. He is equal to every emergency and every need. To Him there are no emergencies. He sees the whole of our journey, knows every step of the way, and has wisely and amply provided for every need. (d)

2. *Always willing to help*. We have not to overcome by our prayers any unwillingness on His part to bless us. We have but sincerely to seek His aid, and He will impart it to us. (e)

3. *Ever available*. We can approach Him at all times and in all places. The cry of supplication or the song of praise will always reach His ear and secure His regard.

Brothers, we are all journeying, and sometimes with weary and aching hearts. Life's changes sometimes clothe our life in shade, and weigh down our hearts with sadness. Its disappointments surprise and grieve our spirits. Our own sins often fill our hearts with shame and sorrow. But here is our unfailing Resource. Our Lord can take away the sin. He can sanctify changes and disappointments to our spiritual and eternal advantage. Let our trust be in Him. We are all journeying; but we may each find the end of our journey to be a secure and blessed home. In that home there shall be no more changes saddening our souls, no more disappointments distressing us, no more sins to harass and grieve the soul; but pure and peaceful life, &c.

"Tuneful is the sound

That dwells in whispering boughs;  
Welcome the freshness round,  
And the gale that fans our brows.  
But rest more sweet and still,  
Than ever nightfall gave,  
Our yearning hearts shall fill,  
In the world beyond the grave.

"There shall no tempests blow,  
No scorching noon-tide heat,  
There shall be no more snow,  
No weary, wandering feet.  
So we lift our trusting eyes  
From the hills our fathers trod,  
To the quiet of the skies,  
To the Sabbath of our God."

—Hemans.



ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) **Three days they marched without finding any water.** We do not, with some, suppose, that during all this time they were without water. This was impossible. They must have brought water in their leathern bottles with them from the last station. But this time having passed without an opportunity of replenishing their vessels, the supply was at length exhausted, and they began to suffer fearfully from thirst. Let us not think lightly of their distress. Thirst is a cruel thing; and it is known to be such even in a humid clime, where the sensation is rarely and lightly experienced, and is very easily removed. But amid the hot sandy waste, under a burning sky, without any means of relief, the suffering is horrible. There is nothing like it. If we reflect that this vast host of men, women, and children, with numerous herds of cattle, had to travel over the sandy waste mostly on foot, with the burning sun over their heads, we may be able to form some faint and inadequate idea of their condition. But if we endeavour to picture to ourselves the circumstances of their case, and the unmistakable signs of suffering and misery which it presented, we shall have a more distinct apprehension of their wretched condition. They plod moodily and heavily on, no man speaking to his fellow. Many cannot speak if they would. Their tongues are parched and rough, and cling to the roofs of their mouths; their lips are black and shrivelled; and their eyeballs are red with heat, and sometimes a dimness comes over them, which makes them stagger with faintness. There is not one in all that multitude who probably would not have given all he possessed in the world, who would not have parted with a limb or have given up his life for one cool draught of water. And this was suffered by a people who had been used to drink without stint of the finest water in the world.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) But lo! their misery, they think is past. In the distance they behold trees and bushes clad in refreshing green, and they know there must be water near. With glad looks

and quickened steps they push joyously on.

“For sure through that green meadow flows  
The living stream! And lo! their famished  
beast

Sees the restoring sight!  
Hope gives his feeble limbs a sudden strength,  
He hurries on.”—*Thalaba.*

What a rush to the water! what eagerness to gulp the refreshing flood! But whence that universal groan, and horror, and despair? The water is bitter—so bitter as to be loathsome even to their intense agony of thirst. Pity them; but judge them not too severely, if, in that awful moment of disappointed hope, with the waters of Marah before their faces, and the waters of the Nile before their thoughts, they did murmur, they did complain that they had been brought from unfailing waters to perish in that thirsty desolation. They should have trusted in God. They had been rescued from more imminent danger; and it was no arm of flesh, but the sacred pillar of cloud, which had indicated their way and brought them to that place. They should have prayed to their Divine Protector to supply their wants, as He was well able to do; and although there is much in the real misery they suffered to extenuate *this* offence, their forgetfulness and neglect were most blameworthy. Yet, in consideration of their sufferings, God Himself excused them in this more readily than man has done. It will be seen in the sacred record that He dealt tenderly with them. He did not, as on other occasions, when they sinned in like manner without the like excuse, reprove them; but when Moses cried to Him for help, He, in the tenderness of His great pity, at once healed the waters, and made them sweet and salutary.—*Ibid.*

(c) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 266, 267; on *Ingratitude*, pp. 247, 368; and on *Unbelief*, p. 252.

(d) An illustration on this point appears on p. 369 (d)

(e) This point also is illustrated on p. 369 (e)

THE HEALING OF THE WATERS OF MARAH.

(Verse 8.)

“And they pitched in Marah.”

I. There are four bitter things of which Marah's waters are a likeness.

1. The bitterness of man's heart. The heart is by nature a bitter fountain sending forth its bitter waters.

2. The bitterness of man's afflictions. Affliction was intended to be a bitter

thing to flesh and blood, for it was part of that punishment which sin brought with it.

3. The bitterness of God's wrath which we have incurred. The displeasure of Him whose favour is life, from whom alone all good cometh.

4. The bitterness of the death that

we must die. This is as the waters of Marah to an ungodly man: "the sting of death is sin."

II. Let us see what answers to the tree, which, being cast into the waters, made them sweet.

The Gospel is able to sweeten all the bitters.

1. *The wrath of God.* Jesus cast Himself into those bitter waters and made them sweet. It was the very God who made the waters bitter, who

pointed out the means of healing them. It was the very God "to whom vengeance belongeth" who hath sent His Son into the world to save us from it.

2. *Afflictions.* It furnishes a *motive* for patience and an *example* to encourage.

3. *The heart of man.* The fountain of the heart is cleansed by grace.

4. *Death.* To him who cordially believes in Jesus, the sting of death is drawn by sin being covered.—*Arthur Roberts.*

### ELIM: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

(Verse 9.)

Wells of the highest importance in Eastern countries. Heat, &c. Here, then, where there were twelve wells, and seventy palm trees, they encamped. Make some observations.

I. In the journey of human life the Lord affords us many kind accommodations.

These mercies are—

1. *Necessary.* What more so than water? So are His favours.

2. *Refreshing.* "Palm trees." Journey wearisome. Their shade delightful, &c. (a)

3. *Various.* Fountains and palm trees. God gives blessings not of some one kind only, but several. Their variety heightens them.

4. *Plentiful.* Twelve fountains and threescore and ten palm trees. They are plentiful if we compare them (1) with the enjoyments of others; (2) with our deserts.

II. Refreshing mercies after seasons of distress are peculiarly sweet.

Many seasons of afflictions, trials of mind, family, &c. Then these mercies sweet—why so?

1. *We have a higher relish for them.* So, spring after winter, health after sickness, &c.

2. *They give a proof that God has not forgotten us.* Apt to think so when He tries us, and we do not receive any peculiar marks of His favour. Then He returns, &c.

3. *They will increase our faith in future trials.* We shall expect in them fresh displays of power and goodness,—this will cause us to love Him more—serve Him better.

III. The blessings with which we are favoured should be used and enjoyed.

They encamped, not only drank, but, &c. All our mercies should be enjoyed.

1. *With humility.* We do not deserve any of them. Are entirely dependent on God for them. God designs by such dependence to keep us humble and obedient.

2. *With gratitude.* Ingratitude hateful to God and man. Gratitude pleasing, and ought naturally to flow to God, &c. Our mercies are great, and call loudly for it.

3. *With a firm resolution to devote the strength derived from them to God, &c.* Thus they will answer the end, &c. Then may we expect more. Devote yourselves therefore to His glory, &c.

IV. Amidst all our enjoyments we should not lose sight of our pilgrimage state.

They encamped, did not build a city, &c. Christians are travellers. World not our rest. We should—

1. *Cherish the idea that all earthly things are fading, withering.* Dew, flowers, &c. So human life. We know it; we should act accordingly. (b)

2. *Prepare for changes.* Changes of

condition, circumstances, feelings,—these are to be expected—will come. This generally acknowledged, and yet how few prepared.

3. *Wish to go forward.* Arguments for it deduced from what is said above. Heaven is at the end,—how worthy of

all our toil,—how refreshing, &c., will it be! (c)

Address,—1. *Such as are now on the march.*

2. *Such as are now encamped at Elim.*

Remarks arising from the subject — *Thos. Spencer.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In eastern countries, where the habit of hospitality is stronger than with us, the traveller is sometimes surprised and regaled by much needed but unexpected wayside comforts. Yonder husbandman, who is now afield at his work, was here in the early morning to leave by the wayside that pitcher of water that the passing traveller might drink. This clump of trees, which makes a thick and welcome "shadow from the heat," was planted by one who expected neither fame nor money for his toil, and who now lies in a nameless grave. Hands now mouldering in dust scooped out this cool seat in the rock. Some "Father Jacob gave us this well, after drinking thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle." Travellers from the west are much affected by such instances of pure humanity and unselfish kindness. And yet these are but feeble types, mere dim shadows of Divine thoughtfulness and care. The heavenly Benefactor comes down in preventing loving kindness upon the pathway of His people. He foreknows, forecasts, foreruns. We think of Jesus as forerunner of His people only "within the veil." In a sense not less true, He is their forerunner along the journey of every day. We cannot be up so early that He has not been waking before us. We cannot run so

fast that He has not far outstripped our speed. Our to-morrow is His yesterday. He is with us and yet before us. He has said at one place and another,—"They are to pass this way; I will leave these helps for them; I will smooth down the over-ruggedness of life, so that they shall get through; I will open rivers for them in high places, and streams in the midst of the desert; and for the ever-recurring weariness of life, for its toil and conflict, heat and trouble, they shall have 'quiet resting places'"—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(b) The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening a cloud, by the reflection of the sun, invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colours, that in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it; but in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaunting appearance nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here.—*Bites.*

(c) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 163 (b), 409 (g).

### IN THE WILDERNESS OF SIN.

#### (Verses 10-13.)

All the places mentioned in these verses were probably situated in the desert of Sin (see *Explanatory Notes in loco*). The principal events in this portion of the journey were the murmuring of the people, and the giving of the manna; and these have been treated in *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*

xvi. Moreover, in our own work we have noticed the base murmuring of the people on other occasions (see pp. 181, 183, 244, 245, 247, 265-267); we have also written on the manna (see pp. 187-190; and *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*, pp. 308, 309). For these reasons we proceed to the next verse.

### REPHIDIM; OR, WATER FROM "THE ROCK IN HOREB."

#### (Verse 14.)

The history of Israel at Rephidim is remarkable by reason of (1) the want

of water, and its miraculous supply; and (2) the battle against Amalek



(Exod. xvii.). A similar want and supply of water we have already noticed (see pp. 366-371); and, having noticed these miracles also in our exposition of Psa. lxxviii. 15, 16 (see *The Hom. Comm. on Psalms*, vol. i. pp. 443-446); we will introduce here a sketch from *Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament*.

Notice.

I. That the place of the miracle was calculated to increase the faith of the man who was to be the instrument in performing it—"the rock in Horeb."

God appeared first to Moses in Horeb (Exod. iii. 1). The return to places which God has fixed indelibly upon our minds by some special manifestation of His providential favour, is very helpful to every man's faith. It was so to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 10) when God said to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 1). He intended to use the place as a means of arousing him to increased faith and obedience by the remembrance of former mercies received there. So in the case of Moses. The return to Horeb would enable him to draw from the past some compensation for the trying circumstances of the present (Exod. xvii. 2-4). The very sight of the place in which God had given him promises (Exod. iii. 10-20), which had since been fulfilled, would give him hope for the future.

II. The temptation connected with the miracle.

The murmuring and chiding of Israel against Moses is said to be *tempting God*. The miracles already wrought by Moses had been an abundant confirmation of His Divine commission. God had in the past so

identified His servant with Himself, that to murmur against him was finding fault with his and their God.

III. The nature of the miracle.

1. *The water from the rock was a miracle, because it gushed forth at the moment when Moses smote the rock, as the Lord had said.* The people by their murmuring had fully admitted that no water could be obtained from natural sources. God never supplies our wants by supernatural means when they can be satisfied by the operation of the ordinary laws of nature.

2. *But though miraculous, it was connected with human agency.* Moses smote the rock, and God gave the water. The rod was in the hand of Moses, the power in the hand of God. Peter took the lame man by the hand, and God gave him the power to walk (Acts iii. 7).

Lesson.

*God can bring good to His people from the most unlikely sources.* Nothing seemed more unlikely to yield water than the barren rock of Horeb. So God often brings refreshing streams of comfort to His people out of hard circumstances. Paul and Silas could sing in the dungeon, and their imprisonment was made the means of adding to their converts in Philippi. The lot of John in Patmos seemed hard and dreary indeed; but, at the bidding of Christ, streams of living water gushed forth there, which refreshed the soul of the apostle at the time, and have followed the Church until the present. Out of the sufferings of the martyrs came joy to themselves and blessings to their descendants. Above all, out of the hard circumstances of the crucified Lord of glory, God has brought forth waters of everlasting life.

### ILLUSTRATION.

At Rephidim they again wanted water, their murmurings were now more violent, and their conduct more outrageous than at Marah. We had then some sympathy for them, and were inclined to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf. But we have not a

word to say for them now. Their misbehaviour is most flagrant, and the harshest judgment cannot estimate their offence too severely. They had lately seen their wants relieved in a similar emergency; and at this very time they were receiving, every morning, from heaven

their daily bread. Yet so strangely unreasonable was their spirit, that they reproached Moses for having brought them out of Egypt, to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst; and their violence of manner was such as led Moses to cry unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." Alas! it had come to this already. Already—in one little month—were the ransomed people prepared to deal thus with their deliverer, all whose toil and

thought were spent for their advantage. Thus soon did they justify the prescient reluctance with which he had abandoned for these responsibilities the safe and quiet life he loved so well. It seems to have been in order that Moses might not be plunged in deeper discouragement, that the Lord forbore to declare His own displeasure. He simply indicated the mode in which He meant to provide for their wants.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

## REPHIDIM; OR, THE BATTLE BETWEEN AMALEK AND ISRAEL.

(Verse 14.)

We cannot well pass away from Rephidim without noticing the remarkable battle which was fought there between the Amalekites and the Israelites, and which is recorded in Exod. xvii. 8-16. Before mentioning what appear to us as its chief teachings, let us attend to some important preliminary considerations.

i. *On the part of the Israelites this battle was entirely defensive* (Exod. xvii. 8; Deut. xxv. 17, 18). It was for the preservation of their own lives, and the lives of their people, that the Israelites fought, and Moses prayed on this day.

ii. *The part which the Israelites took in this battle was approved by Jehovah.* It was commanded by Moses, who, as the minister of Jehovah, was specially authorised and attested; and Jehovah manifested His approval by giving them the victory to a great extent in answer to prayer, and by commanding Moses to write an account of the battle in a book, and thus transmit it to coming generations. This battle was a righteous one on the part of Israel, or it would not thus have received the Divine approval.

iii. *What was the cause of this battle?* This was probably twofold:—(1) The fertility of the valley. We accept the conclusion that Rephidim is Wady Feiran, of which Dr. Hayman speaks as, "the well-known valley, richer in water and vegetation than any other in the peninsula. . . . It is the finest valley in the whole peninsula." And Dean Stanley: "Rephidim,

'the resting places,' is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the adjacent palm-grove; . . . the Amalekites may thus have naturally fought for the oasis of the Desert." (2) The recollection of an ancient injury. The Amalekites were to a great extent, if not entirely, descendants of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12, 16); and is it not probable that the old enmity between Jacob and Esau had something to do with their attack upon Israel? Esau had forgiven Jacob the injury, and God had pardoned his sin, yet the memory of his base act was handed down from generation to generation of the posterity of Esau, arousing their hatred against the posterity of Jacob. Thus the memory of evil is perpetuated, and thus evil actions live and work for long ages after they who did them have passed away, and the sin of the father in its penalty falls upon the children of many following generations. Here is warning, &c.

Let us now view this brief chapter of ancient history in three aspects:—

I. As an illustration of the working of God in human history, or of the means and methods by which He effects His purposes.

Notice the steps that were taken and the means that were employed to vanquish the Amalekites. Joshua was appointed general; he selected the most suitable men to fight the battle; for their encouragement Moses ascended the hill, &c. How, then, did God give

them this victory, and in so doing accomplish His own design in the matter?

1. *By their own efforts.* After the way in which God had dealt with them, they might not very unreasonably have thought, when they were attacked, that without their effort He would deliver them. He led them forth out of Egypt without exertion on their part. When they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host, they had only to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." But had that treatment been continued, they would have remained a nation of slaves or children in spirit. If they are to become a nation of men, they must be roused to effort. So they have to fight the Amalekites.

2. *By the efforts of the most efficient.* Amongst the Israelites there were no trained soldiers; they must have been ill-armed, and had long been inured to servitude. In these circumstances, at the command of Moses, Joshua selected the fittest men to fight the battle.

3. *By the efforts of the most efficient under a most skilful and heroic general.* Joshua was a man of remarkable genius and skill as a leader of men. Considering his previous condition, his generalship is very extraordinary.

4. *By the efforts of the most efficient under an able general, with wise arrangements for arousing and maintaining courage.* At this time the Israelites were anything but heroes: they were sadly deficient of manliness. The rod in the hand of Moses would tend to awaken memory, confidence, and courage. What wonders had been wrought with that rod on former occasions! &c. (a)

5. And in addition to all other things, *the victory was obtained by prayer.* Moses on the hill was, doubtless, engaged in prayer to God. His prayer had power with God. To Him he ascribed the victory. "Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; i.e., Jehovah my banner." (b)

God works by means. He never uses supernatural means where natural ones will accomplish the end. He uses

means eminently adapted to secure the end. He uses men as His instruments; and never does for us that which we can do for ourselves. And in our works He would have us use our utmost skill and power. He does not need our wisdom, and He certainly does not need our ignorance or folly. The Israelites planned and fought as if all depended upon themselves; Moses prayed as if all depended upon God; and when victory was attained they ascribed it to Him. Let us "go, and do likewise." (c)

II. As an illustration of the work and warfare of every good man.

1. *The Christian life involves difficulty, toil, and conflict* (1 Cor. ix. 24-27; Eph. vi. 10-18; Heb. xii. 1-4; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9). We cannot live a Christian life and do Christian work without battling with enemies. We must fight against (1) "the world," or evil in society; (2) "the flesh," or evil in ourselves; and (3) "the devil," or malign spiritual influences. (d)

2. *In the work and warfare of the Christian life we need the help of others.* "We are members one of another." "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," &c. But we are chiefly dependent on Jesus Christ. He is our *General*, our Joshua. "The Captain of our salvation." He is our *Intercessor*, our Moses. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." His uplifted hands are never weary, &c. And as the uplifted rod encouraged the Israelites, so *the presence of Christ nerves the spirit for the fight.* "Looking unto Jesus" is the true attitude of every Christian both in work and in warfare.

3. *By earnest, believing effort, and the help of God, the work and warfare of the Christian life will be ultimately accomplished and crowned with victory.* Effort, or no effort; effort with God, or effort without God; upon the determination of these the issues of life's work and warfare depend. No effort, or effort without God, means failure: personal effort with God means success, victory.



### III. As an illustration of the work and warfare of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The call of God to the Church is to take possession of the world in His name and for Him; and to accomplish this its members must battle with the Amalekites of crime, vice, ignorance, superstition, religious indifference, &c. In the prosecution of this work and warfare—

1. *The Church needs leaders.* The Lord Jesus is our great Leader: He is "head over all to the Church." But we need subordinate leaders also. No leaders means no rule, no discipline, no order; but anarchy, incompetence, confusion.

2. *The labours of all and every one are required.* In the battle Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Hur, and all the fighting men, were occupied, while the others were employed in guarding the women and children, the flocks and herds, and the baggage. In the Church there is work for every one, &c. This is a correction (1) to those who think they can do nothing; (2) to those who think they can do anything and everything. Every one should work, and every one should do his own work.

3. *The Church succeeds in her efforts*

in proportion as she maintains her communication with Heaven. (Comp. Exod. xvii. 11.) Our great Intercessor ever prays. But much depends upon our own prayers. The praying church is the working church, and the conquering church.

4. *The greatest men in the Church are dependent upon the help of the smallest men.* Moses needed the aid of Hur. In these days ministers in some cases are left to pray alone, work alone, fight alone.

5. *Success or failure often depends upon comparatively small and feeble men.* If Hur had not been with Moses, Israel would probably have been defeated. Success in the enterprises of the Church depends upon every man doing his own work, however obscure and humble it may be.

6. *The ultimate victory of the Church is certain.* "Jehovah is my banner." The battle is not ours but God's. Battle of truth and right against error, &c. (e)

7. *The victory will be ascribed to God in Christ.* "Joshua discomfited Amalek." "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Unto Him be all the glory. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," &c. (Rev. v. 12, 13).

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Joshua led forth his men to the field; and Moses mounted the hill, accompanied by Aaron his brother, and by Hur, who is supposed to have been his brother-in-law. Here Moses stood, and held up his hand on high, with the wonder-working rod therein. It was no doubt held up, in the first instance, as a kind of banner or signal, to be seen by the warring host below, and designed to operate as a continual incentive to their valour and prowess while engaged in the contest; and the sight of this symbol and instrument of the power which had worked so wondrously on their behalf, could not fail to nerve their arms with new vigour every time their eyes were turned towards it. Yet it needed but little reflection to assure them that, as is very manifest, there was no inherent virtue in the rod to produce this effect; and that it derived all its efficacy from the Divine appointment, as a visible symbol of that unseen succour and strength which God was pleased to minister to

His militant servants fighting His battle, and maintaining the high glory of His name.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) Moses was eminently an intercessor with God for the people committed to his charge; and there can be no question that, in connection with these external and symbolical actions, fervent prayer for the Divine aid was offered; the uplifting of the rod being thus merely an accompaniment of the earnest intercessions which breathed from the lips and hearts of the venerable men upon the mountain. And even if this were not the case, the circumstances and the result are strikingly analogous to those of intercessory prayer, and suggestive of them.—*Ibid.*

*On the power of intercession, illustrations are given on pp. 183, 225.*

(c) We notice here grouped together that hallowed combination of agencies which ought never to be separated—the dependence upon Heaven, with the use of appointed

means. The rod in the hand of Moses, and the sword in that of Joshua; the embattled host in the valley below, and the praying hand in the mount above—all were necessary in the Divine economy to the victory of Israel over his foes. So must it be in our own conflict with the Amalek that lies ambushed within, to hinder our progress to the mount of God. We may expect no manifestation of the Lord's power, no interference of His goodness, but as the result of a blessing upon our own zealous conflict with temptation. "Prayer without active duty is mockery of God. He who entreats deliverance from the onset and power of evil, yet never makes an effort in his own behalf, nor strives against the sin that wars within him, draws nigh to God with his lips, but is wholly estranged from the fervour of that supplication that issues from the depths of the heart." Yet it was intended to be taught, and was most effectually taught by this example, that the uplifted hand of Moses contributed more to the safety of the Israelites

than their own hands—his rod more than their weapons of war; and accordingly their success fluctuates as he raises up or lets down his hands. In like manner will the Christian warfare be attended with little success, unless it be waged in the practice of unceasing earnest prayer. It will never be known on this side the Lord's second coming, how much His cause, and the work of individual salvation, have been advanced by "the effectual fervent prayer" of righteous men. And it is surely a cheering reflection in the heat and burden of the day of battle, that while we are contending below, faithful servants of God have ascended the hill of spiritual prayer, and are imploring blessings upon our efforts.—*Ibid.*

Another illustration on the Divine use of suitable means in accomplishing His designs, appears on p. 539.

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 416. (b)

(e) Illustrations on the *Certainty of the Christian Victory* appear on pp. 416, 417.

#### ISRAEL AND AMALEK.

##### (Verse 14.)

The Israelites had been redeemed from Egypt, and were on their way to Canaan. This, therefore, is a picture of the Christian life, and is full of teaching to all believers. Taking it in this light, we see—

##### I. The Christian's example.

1. *To fight.* (1) An aggressive fight. "Go." (2) To be done wisely. "Choose you out men." (3) Earnestly. "Fight." Hard blows. No parley. (4) Continually. "War with Amalek from generation to generation."

2. *To pray.* (1) For those who fight. (2) Earnestly. Not growing weary. Hard blows and hard prayers. (3) Confidently. "The rod." Symbol of past mercies. (4) Unitedly. "Moses, Aaron, and Hur,"

&c. Promises given to two or three.

##### II. The Christian's encouragement,

1. *Christ, our Captain* (Joshua). (1) With us to cheer. Wellington's presence on battle-field. (2) With us to direct. (3) With us to defend.

##### 2. *Christ, our Intercessor* (Moses).

(1) He prays while we work. (2) He prays continually. Never grows weary. (3) He prays successfully.

##### III. The Christian's prospect.

1. *Of certain victory.* The result is sure. Every foe shall be overcome.

2. *Of certain glory.* While God's servants ascribe all the glory to Him (Exod. xvii. 15), He, nevertheless, delights to honour them (*Ibid.*, 13).—*D. Macmillan.*

#### "IN THE DESERT OF SINAI": THE MORAL LAW.

##### (Verse 15.)

The Israelites were encamped in the desert of Sinai for the space of nearly a year (Exod. xix. 1; chap. x. 11, 12). Although we cannot attempt to consider their history during that time, yet we

cannot pass over this encampment without a brief notice of two or three of its principal events. And here let us notice the *Moral Law* (Exod. xx. 1-17).

The moral law which was delivered

by Moses from Mount Sinai was distinguished by many peculiar and blessed characteristics.

**I. It based its precepts upon the existence and authority of God.**

To believe in God is not one of the ten commandments. This fact is presupposed in the preface to them, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt," &c. This is the foundation of all that follows. And as God is the Lord their God, and has proved His right to issue His commands by His wonderful deeds in their behalf, so it is fitting that the first four precepts in the code should concern His own relation to the people of His choice, referring (1) to the necessity of having no other God but Him; (2) to the spiritual mode in which He, a spirit, must be worshipped; (3) to the reverence in which His very Name should be regarded; and (4) to the duty of devoting one whole day of the seven to His worship. The large space given to God in the ten commandments is quite in consonance with the theocratic nature of the Jewish economy. God in it was the leading thought, man secondary; whereas in the Christian dispensation, through the union of the two natures in Christ, it is hard to say which is made more prominent. It is, verily, the economy of the *God-man*.

**II. It was a strict and stern, but far from being an unjust or cruel system.**

It denied no enjoyment that was natural, and it inculcated no duty that was harsh. None of the commandments were "grievous." All conducted at once to the happiness of man and to the glory of God. The first precept secured the Jews from the distraction of mind and heart connected with the worship of many gods. The second inculcated a form of worship less cumbrous and burdensome, as well as more spiritual, than idolatry. The third, in consecrating the name of God, taught His worshippers to reverence and love Him better. The fourth provided for them a day of grateful rest and refreshment

amid their toils, and held out, typically, the prospect of a future and serener existence. The fifth was expressly sealed by a promise, that to those who obeyed it, their days should be long upon the land. The sixth, in forbidding murder, tended to prevent the misery which springs from it to all concerned, either as actors or sufferers, and to cherish that spirit of love and mutual forbearance which is productive of so much true happiness. The seventh commanded men to shun those ill-regulated passions and practices which create such remorse, satiety, hardness of heart, and family disturbance. The eighth secured the rights of property. The ninth taught the value of truthfulness, and the duty of regarding our neighbour's good name as if it were our own. The tenth sought to crush, in the secret recesses of the heart, the seeds of all evil conduct, and thereby to cleanse and sweeten the inner nature.

**III. It was singularly well suited to the age and to the people to whom it was promulgated.**

That age was early, and that people was rude and child-like. The precepts of the law required, therefore, to be dogmatic, to be strict, to be free in their expression from all abstract terms and recondite reasonings, to be frequently repeated, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." All this we find characteristic of the law of Moses.

**IV. Another evidence of the divinely-wise applicability of this law to the Jewish people we find in certain circumstances which tended at once to guard, to sanction, to enforce, recommend, and to illustrate it.**

One of these was the grandeur and terror connected with its announcement from Sinai. . . . The tables of stone still remained, written by the very finger of God, and were cherished with the highest veneration. Moses, after he had finished the writings of the book of the law, deposited it with his people in the following remarkable words, "he commanded the Levites,



which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book," &c. (Deut. xxxi. 25, 26). . . . The splendid appurtenances of the Jewish worship were meant to illustrate the principles of the law, moral as well as ceremonial, to the imperfectly developed minds of the people. . . . Had the law gone forth naked, it would have had little effect upon such a people; but it went forth in beautiful costume and in dazzling armour, and did a great, although a temporary, work.

V. The system itself is the best proof of its Divine origin.

Its very defects and limitations, as well as its glories, showed it to be no human contrivance; its imperfections arose not from the miscalculations of weakness, but from the foresight of wisdom. . . . Life and immortality were reserved for the illumination of Christ. But how wonderful, that without these ideas of rewards and punishments in a future life being very prominently brought before the minds of men, a national polity was not only possible, but continued for a long time powerful and prosperous!—From "*Alpha and Omega*," by G. Gilfillan, M.A.

### IN THE DESERT OF SINAI; THE GOLDEN CALF.

#### (Verse 15.)

Let us see what instruction we can gather from this impressive portion (Exod. xxxii.) of sacred history.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites were analogous to the circumstances of a large portion of mankind at the present day.

1. *The Israelites had witnessed a terrific display of the Divine character.* The attributes of sovereignty, justice, holiness, and truth, had been set forth in the most impressive manner, so as to come in contact not only with the thoughts, the feelings, but the very senses. Now there is something analogous to this in the experience of most at some period or other, especially of those who live under the sound of the Gospel. The hearer of the true Gospel lives in the atmosphere of Sinai, as well as of Calvary; he hears of the justice and truth of God, as well as of His mercy; and if he do not stand in awe of the sterner attributes, as well as rejoice in the milder, then you may be assured that he is hearing the Gospel to no purpose: he has not even begun to comprehend its true import.

2. *The Israelites had just given their solemn affirmative response to God's covenant*, as it had been read to them by Moses; and they were bound by every consideration of honour, of gratitude,

of duty, to obey it. In like manner, there are multitudes at this day, all over Christendom, who have professed not only a belief in the Divine testimony, but obedience to the Divine precepts.

II. The conduct of the Israelites in making and worshipping the calf, in those peculiar circumstances, was analogous to much that is passing in the world around us.

What rendered the conduct of the Israelites so exceedingly strange and criminal was, that it should have occurred amidst the awful scenes of Horeb. You have been sitting under the preaching of the Gospel from the time that you were able to understand it; its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, have been set before you in every variety of form, while you have always had the written Word within your reach, with every facility for studying and understanding it. And what demonstrations have you made in these circumstances? Why, you have been guilty of idolatry just as truly as the Israelites were; you have worshipped gold just as truly as they did; and the fact that they chose the form of a calf, and you choose some other form, makes no difference as to the actual guilt in the eye of Heaven.

Time has been when God's hand rested heavily upon you, and death, perhaps, came into your very chamber, and you saw some one carried to the grave for whom you felt that you could have given even your life. But this affliction found you a worshipper of the world, and it had no effect in rendering you permanently otherwise.

You have sometimes had your lot cast in the midst of the effusions of God's Holy Spirit; and go where you might, the anxious enquiry on the one side, and the song of thanksgiving on the other, was falling upon your ear. But neither the one nor the other was heard to escape *your* lips. You had your golden calf, and that was enough for *you*.

III. The guilt of the Israelites in making and worshipping the golden calf was not a little enhanced by the peculiar circumstances under which the sin was committed; and there is a corresponding aggravation from a similar cause attending many of those idolatrous attachments which are often witnessed in our day.

Everything around them told of the Divine presence; everything that they saw and heard was adapted to dissuade them from this impious outrage. And yet they heeded it not,—they became gross idolaters within the sound of Jehovah's voice, within the very blaze of His glory.

Nor is the case dissimilar as it is often witnessed at the present day among ourselves. God speaks now by

His *Providence*, by His *Word*, by His *Spirit*. He has spoken through the voice of your own *conscience*. You, not less than the Israelites, have been sinning while God has been very near to you. You, as truly as they, have been idolaters amid scenes which ought to overwhelm you with a sense of the Divine presence; and whether this circumstance must not materially aggravate your guilt and condemnation, judge ye.

IV. God did not suffer this sin of the Israelites to go unpunished; neither can those who are guilty of a similar sin at the present day expect to escape punishment.

The first part of their punishment consisted in the destruction of their idol. Does not this conduct of God towards the Israelites illustrate a general principle of His administration?

Moses instituted a terrible work of death in respect to the idolaters. Sometimes God performs a mighty retributive work in the sinner's bosom through the power of conscience, and months and years of unmitigated inward torture seem to change life itself into a living death. Sometimes persons of this character are cut off in so sudden and striking a manner, that we can hardly suppress the conviction that there is something judicial in the circumstances of their death.

There are a thousand voices charging you to forsake your idols, and to make Jehovah your portion.—*W. B. Sprague, D.D.*

# IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: LESSONS FROM THE WORSHIP OF THE CALF.

(Verse 15, with *Exod. xxxii. 1-5.*)

Human nature being the same, history is in principle constantly repeating itself. The facts of Bible history are recorded that we may get at underlying truths, such truths being God's teaching to us. In the event to which reference is here made, we observe—

I. The difficulty to human nature of faith in the unseen.

"This Moses, we wot not what is become of him."

II. The impatience of man at God's method of working.

Moses delayed in the mount. The people would not wait for the man with God's Word.

III. That man will have a god.

"Up, make us gods." They are

often *manufactured* gods. The man who would be popular must make gods to go before the people. It is the ruin of a people when they worship false gods. It is the very height of folly, when men of science, art, or manufactures, say of *their own works*: "These be thy gods, O Israel."

IV. The effect of slavish adherence to old ideas.

In one sense, at least, they were not out of Egypt—the sacred ox. See the importance of keeping the young from early impressions of error. Let none expose themselves to false teaching; it may bring them into bondage.

V. Their extravagant expenditure for the gratification of a fancy (vers. 2, 3).

People often spend more in superstition than Christians for the truth. Christians spend far more for *luxury, pleasure, fancy*, than for *Christ*. Who amongst us is willing to do as much for Jesus as these people did to procure a golden calf?

VI. How art is desecrated to sinful purposes (ver. 4).

So in building at Babel; in worship at Babylon, and Ephesus, and Athens. Abundant proofs in our picture galleries and museums, and also in our modern theatres, gin palaces, &c.

VII. That if God is dishonoured, man is misled, humiliated, ruined.

"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—*W. Whale*.

#### IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: MOSES'S COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE MOUNT.

(Verse 15, with Exod. xxxiv. 29 35.)

There was a great deal of what was miraculous, no doubt, in this transaction, but there is much also that, properly improved, will tend to our spiritual edification.

I. The cause of that radiance which appeared in the face of Moses.

The converse which Moses held with God in the mount, was the cause of that glory which rested on his countenance. He ascended the mountain to hold intercourse with God, and while he talked with Him his face shone. In the account of this transaction, there are two particulars worthy of notice.

1. *Moses offered sacrifices before ascending to hold communion with God* (see Exod. xxiv.). This indicates a great principle connected with all true religion—that religion has always rested on sacrifice (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4). The Jewish religion, in all its ritual and services, rested upon this great principle. The distinctive feature of Christianity embraces the same principle. One of our great Christian privileges is to ascend the mountain and hold communion with God. But to be thus brought together, there

must be something done on both sides: On the part of God there must be utterance given to the voice of mercy and love, there must be a way of access to His throne; on the part of man there must be faith. God in Christianity has made three great provisions to this end—a sacrifice, a mediation, and spiritual influences. (1) *The sacrifice of Christ is the standing medium of communication and fellowship between God and man*. The atonement has only been offered once, yet the effect is everlasting. In all His transactions with us, God has ever regard to the sacrifice of Christ; He never pardons a sinner, but through the atonement; He never adopts the prodigal, and invests him with the rights, privileges, and honours of a child, but through the atonement; He never confers spiritual joy, or any other blessing, upon the believer, but through the atonement. (2) *There is a provision of mediation*. Mediation does not merely embrace the office of intercessor, but it is a great sublime scheme of spiritual and providential administration. Christ sits upon the throne; to Him all power in heaven



and earth is given; it is exercised with reference to the great purposes of atonement. (3) *Spiritual influence also is a part of Christianity.* This is inseparably connected with the great work of our Lord and Saviour. We might as well talk of Christianity without a Saviour, as of Christianity without the Holy Ghost.

These are the provisions which Christianity makes for our ascending the mount to hold communion with God; let us avail ourselves of them, and go up confidently with the blood of atonement to hear His voice, to taste His love, and to receive the fulness of joy.

2. *Moses ascended the mountain alone.* This opens to us another principle of religion: it is this—that in all respects it is personal. Our devotional exercises are of this nature. It is true that we meet in public fellowship, but there is a sense in which the soul sits solitary in the midst of a mighty multitude. Our emotions are all personal. In His dealings with us God addresses us as individuals. Pardon, renewal, eternal life, are bestowed on individuals. These blessings are all personal. Duties are personal: one cannot discharge the duties of another. Enjoyments are personal. The closet is the place where we must test our religious character. There is something suspicious when our joy is only connected with public devotional exercises; but when we are alone and enjoy communion with God, then may we regard our feelings as genuine.

II The nature of the light and glory which rested on the face of Moses.

There is a great mystery in this, but

it was intended to be symbolical of a better glory. We shall pass over the symbolical meaning, and make some remarks of a practical bearing.

1. *Intercourse with God will be productive of joy to the soul.* There will be rapturous joy. How can it be otherwise when the Saviour first reveals Himself to the sinner's heart? How can it be otherwise when a man finds himself adopted into the Divine family, a partaker of the love of God, and admitted to daily fellowship?

2. *Intercourse with God must have the effect of expanding the capacity and of enlarging the soul.* The religious man can enjoy every form of truth and knowledge in the world in common with the man who is solely devoted to its pursuits; but, unlike him, he has the infinite prospect of the glories of heaven and eternal life.

3. *Intercourse with God will produce beauty of character.* We cannot enjoy Divine grace, love, sanctification, and the privileges of the Christian state, but our internal purity will exhibit itself by a spotless life.

III. The conduct of Moses when he descended from the mount.

"He put a vail on his face." Religion in this life is often veiled under circumstances which obscure its grandeur. For instance, what a contrast there exists betwixt the employments of many Christians and their enjoyments; by the one they are almost assimilated to the beasts of the earth, by the other they are allied to heaven. Poverty, dark providences, and affliction, often veil the spiritual state of good men.—*D.*, in "*One Hundred Sketches of Sermons.*"

### ILLUSTRATION.

The effect of the vision is so great that when Moses comes down from the mount, with the new tables of testimony in his hand, which God had inscribed with the commandments of the law, his face is seen to be shining. He has no need, in faint and feeble words, to tell with whom he had been conversing; his face becomes eloquent, and rays out the tidings. Even as the red cloud, which the

evening sun has coloured, continues red after he has set, so there is a relict radiance on the face of Moses from that of God. "The skin of his face shone," and it added to the effect, that he "wist not that it shone." Beauty is never so beautiful as when unconscious. Strength is never so strong as when leaning on its right arm. Terror is never so terrible as when it forgets itself. The

sun seems so glorious, and the moon so lovely, and the stars so pure, because we feel that they know not that they are. And thus the unconscious shining of the countenance of Moses struck awe into all beholders. They were afraid to come nigh unto him. He seemed insulated in the sea of glory still. It seemed God's own face that

they gazed at. Yet it was only from the terror of others that he learned his own glorious appearance. And after talking to the trembling Israelites for a time, he at last put on a veil, which shaded the splendours of his face, and which he only dropped when he entered into the tabernacle to meet with God.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

#### KIBROTH-HATTAVAH.

(Verse 16.)

The history of the people at this encampment has already engaged our attention in chap. xi. See pp. 179-212.

#### HAZEROTH.

(Verse 17.)

This encampment is remarkable as the scene of the sedition of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, and its punishment (chap. xii.). See pp. 213-227.

#### RITHMAH.

(Verse 18.)

The history of the people at this encampment was both momentous and mournful in a very great degree. It is recorded in chaps. xiii. and xiv. See *Explanatory Note* on the verse, and pp. 228-269.

#### NOTHING BUT NAMES.

(Verses 19-36.)

We have here the names of the places at which the people encamped during the years of penal wanderings. What took place at any of these stations we know not; and the places themselves, with the exception of Ezion Geber, are unknown. The paragraph is little more than mere names, and suggests the following reflections.

I. The tendency of sin to deprive life of any worthy significance.

In the history of this people there was little worth recording for 38 years. Sin is prone to rob life of all true and noble elements, of inspiration and helpfulness to good, of brave and earnest enterprise; and to bring

people into such a state that they have no history to write, or no history worth writing.

II. The tendency of sin to retard progress

Here are a number of journeys, but no advancement towards their destination. There was movement without progress. The unbelief, cowardice, and rebellion of the people against God caused this (chap. xiv.). Sin takes the wheels off the chariots of human progress, so that they drag slowly and heavily along. Nay, it even completely arrests progress. This is true of communities. For the space of almost 38 years the progress of this nation was held back

by their sins. It is true also of individuals.

III. The importance of remembering the losses which sin causes us.

For this reason there is some record of these seemingly fruitless years—these penal wanderings.

1. *Such remembrance should promote humility.* "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee," &c. (Deut. viii. 2).

2. *Such remembrance should restrain from sin.* The recollection of the loss and injury which sin has caused us is calculated to cause us to abhor and avoid sin. And when it involves loss and trouble to a whole generation of people, the recollection of it is fitted to lead the coming generations to shun the sins of their ancestors (comp. *Psa. lxxviii. 3-8*).

IV. The mutability of earthly and temporal things.

When this itinerary was written, these seventeen places were well known; but at the present time of only one of them is anything whatever known of a certainty. Places great and famous in days of yore, have vanished almost as completely.

"Cities numberless, Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Babylon, and Troy, And rich Phœnicia—they are blotted out, Half-raz'd from memory, and their very name And being in dispute."—*H. K. White.*

Therefore, "love not the world, neither the things in the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17). "Seek those things which are above," &c. (Col. iii. 1, 2). (a)

V. The unsettled character of human life upon earth.

"They departed from Rithmah and pitched at Rimmon-parez. . . . And they journeyed from Rissah and pitched in Kehelathah. . . . And they removed from Mount Shapher and encamped in Haradah," &c. Such is the character of the record—a record of removals, &c. And such is human life in this world. "This is not your rest." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (b)

The suggestions of this paragraph may be developed also with these two inquiries as the principal divisions.

I. Why have we here nothing but names?

II. Seeing that we have here nothing but names, why are these names recorded?

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) God has written it on every page of His creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change. The friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. Our very selves are altering. The basis of our being may remain, but our views, tastes, feelings, are no more our former self than the oak is the acorn. The very face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the gray mouldering ruins to tell of what was once. Our labourers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth—skeletons of men, to whom life once was dear—urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. To-day the shot of the enemy defaces and blackens monuments and venerable temples, which remind the Christian that into the deep silence of eternity the Roman world has passed away. And so things are going. It is a work of weaving and unweaving. All passes. Names that the world heard once in

thunder are scarcely heard at the end of centuries—good or bad, they pass. A few years ago and we were not. A few centuries further, and we reach the age of beings of almost another race. Nimrod was the conqueror and scourge of his far-back age. Tubal Cain gave to the world the iron which was the foundation of every triumph of men over nature. We have their names now. But the philologist is uncertain whether the name of the first is real or mythical—and the traveller excavates the sand-mounds of Nineveh to wonder over the records which he cannot decipher. Tyrant and benefactor, both are gone. And so all things are moving on to the last fire which shall wrap the world in conflagration, and make all that has been the recollection of a dream. This is the history of the world, and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. Like as when you watch the melting tints of the evening sky—purple-crimson, gorgeous gold, a few pulsa-



tions of quivering light, and it is all gone :—  
 “we are such stuff as dreams are made of,”—  
*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) For illustrations on this point, see pp.  
 163 (b), 409 (g).

“FROM KADESH . . . . UNTO ABEL-SHITTIM IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.”

(Verses 37-49.)

The history of the people in these journeys and encampments has already engaged much of our attention in our progress through this book. In the

*Explanatory Notes* on the verses the chapters and verses are given for the history of each encampment.

THE EXPULSION OF THE CANAANITES.

(Verses 50-56.)

Consider—

I. The imperative command.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan,” &c. (verses 50-54).

1. *To utterly expel the inhabitants of Canaan.* “When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you; . . . and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein.” This command had been given to them previously in Exod. xxiii. 31-33; xxxiv. 11-17; and it was repeated in a more severe form in Deut. vii. 1-6. In this latter place they are commanded to “utterly destroy them,” and that without mercy. And both in Exodus and in Deut. one reason for this stern command is assigned, viz., that their presence in the land would be a source of peril to the Israelites, leading them to enter into social alliances with them and to conform to their idolatrous practices, and so awakening the anger of the Lord against them to their own destruction.

Learn: *The sin and peril of evil associations.* (a)

2. *To completely destroy all idolatrous objects and places.* “Destroy all their pictures”—idols of stone—“and de-

stroy all their molten images”—or idols cast from copper—“and quite pluck down all their high places” (comp. Exod. xxiii. 24; xxxiv. 13-15; Deut. vii. 5; xii. 2, 3). Nothing was to be preserved for the gratification of antiquarian tastes, or as curious relics of foreign customs. There must be an utter destruction of all and everything that had been associated with idolatry; because such things were offensive to God and perilous to man. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” &c. (Exod. xx. 3-5).

Learn: *The heinousness of the sin of idolatry in the sight of God.* (b)

3. *To equitably divide the land.* “And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families,” &c. (verse 54). We have already noticed this in chap. xxvi. 53-56 (see pp. 502, 503).

4. *The authority by which they were to do these things.* They had the authority of Jehovah their God. He gave them the command; and He assigned this reason for it: “for I have given you the land to possess it.” He is the great Proprietor of all things. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” He has a right to do what He will with His own. But in addition to this, “the iniquity of the Amorites” was now “full.” The filthiest abominations were practised amongst

them, they were sunk in the grossest immoralities. "For the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. ix. 4). So utterly depraved were the Canaanites that it is said that "the land itself vomited them out" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). (c)

## II. The solemn warning.

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass," &c. (vers. 55, 56). They are here solemnly warned that, if they failed to obey the Divine commands now given to them,—

1. *Those whom they spared would become their tormentors.* "Those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye shall dwell." "Under these metaphors," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the continual mischief that should be done to them, both in soul and body, by these idolators, is set forth in a very expressive manner. What can be more vexatious than a continual goading of each side, so that the attempt to avoid the one throws the body more forcibly on the other? And what can be more distressing than a continual pricking in the eye, harassing the mind, tormenting the body, and *extinguishing the sight?*" "That which we are willing should tempt us, we shall find will vex us."

2. *The God whom they disobeyed would disinherit them.* "Moreover it

shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them." This solemn warning was repeated by Joshua (Josh. xxiii. 13): but Israel disregarded it, and reaped the bitter result. "Subsequent history proves," as Scott remarks, "that these denunciations were real *prophecies*, which have been wonderfully accomplished, even to this day. During many ages, the remnant of the devoted nations were extremely troublesome to the Israelites, even as 'pricks in the eyes and thorns in the side,' which would be a constant and almost intolerable torture: and at length, as they persisted in imitating their idolatries and atrocious crimes, they were punished as the Lord proposed to punish the Canaanites; being expelled from their country with tremendous slaughter, first by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and at length more completely by the Romans."

Learn:—

*The importance of zeal and thoroughness in waging war against those Canaanites of the heart, our indwelling sins.* "If we show any quarter to our sinful propensities, they will gather strength by indulgence, mar the comfort of our lives, and perhaps be 'pricks in our eyes and thorns in our sides' when we lie upon a death-bed." "If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out; if we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls." (d)

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This lesson is illustrated on pp. 308, 428.

(b) All sin is hateful to God, and none but the cleansed, perfect soul shall stand before Him in the presence of His glory; nor any in whom iniquity hath dominion shall stand accepted in the presence of His grace; but yet no particular sin is so hateful to Him as idolatry is. For this is not only a trespassing against His laws, but a disclaiming or rejecting His very sovereignty itself. To give a prince irreverent language, and to break his laws, is punishable; but to pull him out of his throne, and set up a scullion in it, and give him the honour and obedience of a king, this is another kind of matter, and much more in-

tolerable. The first commandment is not like the rest, which require only obedience to particular laws in a particular action; but it establisheth the very relations of sovereign and subject, and requires a constant acknowledgment of these relations, and makes it high treason against the God of heaven in any that shall violate that command. Every crime is not treason; it is one thing to miscarry in a particular case, and another thing to have other gods before and besides the Lord, the only God. Now, this is the sin of every worldling: he hath taken down God from the throne in his soul, and set up the flesh and the world in His stead; these he valueth, and magnifieth, and delighteth in;

these have his very heart, while God that made it and redeemed him is set light by.—*Richard Baxter.*

(c) While, on the one hand, the donation of this land to the Israelites was an act of the Lord's free favour, the denial of it to the Canaanites was no less an act of His retributive justice—of such justice as it behoved the moral Governor of the world to administer against a people laden with iniquity. Gen. xv. 13-16 is a passage which proves this clearly. Abraham is there informed that, before his posterity would receive that goodly heritage, a long period of four hundred years must elapse, great part of which would be spent by them under oppression in a land which was not theirs. Eventually they should be brought forth with great substance; and in the "fourth generation they shall come hither again." Why is this return so long deferred? Why not until the fourth generation? Hear the reason: "*For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*"

These last words are important for more than one reason. First, they exclude all human right of the Hebrews to Palestine; for if such a right had existed, why, for its being enforced, should the filling up of the iniquity of the Amorites be required? Secondly, if the cause why Abraham's descendants were not now, but after a long interval, to obtain possession of the Promised Land, was, that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, it is thereby equally intimated that this filling up of their iniquity would justify, if not demand, the Divine judgment, which under existing circumstances would have been unjust—in the same way as God, before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by His immediate decree, first of all permitted the abandoned depravity of the inhabitants most notoriously to manifest itself.

When the time was fully come, the Canaanites became a doomed people—doomed to expulsion or extermination by the Israelites, to whom was committed the sword of judgment, and who were the destined inheritors of the land of which the Canaanites had by that time proved themselves unworthy. This solemn doom is expressed in the Hebrew by a peculiar word (*cherem*), which is always applied to such devotedness to destruction in vindication of the Divine justice; and this is the term constantly applied to the Canaanites, as to a people who, by their enormities, had dishonoured the moral government of God, and were, therefore, to be constrained, by the judgment inflicted upon them, to glorify that government, and thereby to set forth the great truth, that there is a pure and holy Ruler of the nations.

Then, again, the Israelites, favoured as they were for their fathers' sake, were apprised that even they held the land by no other tenure than that which the Canaanites were to be destroyed for infringing. Over and over again were they warned, that if they fell

into the same dreadful transgressions for which the Canaanites had been cast out, they would subject themselves to the same doom—be like them destroyed—like them cast out of the good land which they had defiled. We are not left altogether in the dark as to the nature of the abominations which pervaded the land, and which cried to God to show Himself as one abhorring iniquity, and to prove that the world was not left fatherless of His care. In one place, the sacred text, after enumerating various cases of unchastity and impiety of the vilest kind, goes on to say, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled; therefore do I visit the iniquity of the land upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). In another place, the Israelites are solemnly warned against imitating the conduct of their predecessors, lest they incur the same penalties: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord which He hateth have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods" (Deut. xii. 30, 31). What more emphatic testimony can be required than this?—*John Kitto, D.D.*

God is Sovereign of the universe. He has a right to dispose of any part of it as He will. God is also infinitely just. He governs His Kingdom in strictest accordance with justice. To punish the guilty is a just act. The Canaanites were guilty. By a long continued course of rebellion and abominable crime, they had become not only altogether corrupt, but absolutely hopeless. Their iniquity became full. Then God drove them out to make room for His own people.

A great truth is sometimes either forgotten or ignored by the sentimental school of philosophers, that "the punishment of the wicked is as indispensable a part of moral government as the reward of the good." The remarks of Kalisch on this subject are admirable: "If we survey the Biblical system with regard to this subject, we are surprised by its grandeur and comprehensiveness. The Canaanites themselves were not the original inhabitants of the land; they settled there after having destroyed most of the earlier tribes—the Rephaim, the Emim, the Anakim, and others. They had therefore had a personal experience of how God punished wantonness and impiety; but they were not warned by it: they gradually fell into the same vices and crimes; and they were doomed to suffer the same extreme judgment. But whilst the measure of their iniquity was filling, God reared in a foreign land the future occupants of their abode: the degeneracy of the Canaanites kept pace with the increase and development of the Israelites. However great and awful the former might have been, the God of mercy protracted and



delayed long the day of judgment; and however glorious Abraham's merit was, on account of which his descendants were destined to possess Canaan, the God of justice did not accelerate their deliverance from the oppression in Egypt, which they had deserved by their faithlessness. The Israelites, regenerated by their trials in the desert, were the instruments of chastisement to the Canaanites; as, later, the Assyrians and Babylonians, though unconscious of their office and mission, were used as the rod of destruction against the Israelites. This is the only view

in which the occupation of Palestine by the Hebrews can be regarded according to the Biblical allusions."—*J. L. Porter, D.D., L.L.D.*

(d) Use sin as it will use you; spare it not, for it will not spare you: it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world: use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you; and though it kill your bodies, it shall not be able to kill your souls; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there.—*Richard Baxter.*

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter consists of two portions: (1) the boundaries of the Promised Land (vers. 1-15), and (2) the names of the persons who were appointed to distribute the land (vers. 16-29).

Verse 2. *Canaan with the coasts thereof.* Keil and Del.: "Canaan according to its boundaries."

Verses 3-5. "Render: 'Then your south quarter shall extend from the wilderness of Zin which resteth upon the side of Edom. And your south border shall start from the extremity of the salt sea on the east; and your border shall turn on the south to Maaleh-akrabbim, and shall pass on toward Zin, and the extent of its reach on the south shall be to Kadesh-barnea; and it shall reach forth thence to Hazar-addar, and shall pass on to Azmon, and from Azmon the border shall turn to the river of Egypt, and its reach shall be to the sea.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. In the former part of this verse we have a general description of the southern boundary, which is afterwards more particularly defined.

*The wilderness of Zin.* See on chap. xii. 16; xiii. 21.

*The utmost coast of the Salt Sea, &c.; i.e.* from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea in a south-westerly direction.

Verse 4. *The ascent of Akkrabbim, or Maaleh-akrabbim, the ascent of scorpions, or "the scorpion pass."* Probably the pass of Sâfeh. So Stanley, Robinson,

Grove. Scorpions abound in the whole of this district.

*Kadesh-barnea.* See on chap. xiii. 26.

*Hazar-addar*=village of Addar. In Josh. xv. 3, it is mentioned as two places, "Hezron and Adar." The former was probably "the general name of a district of *Hazers*, or nomad hamlets, of which Addar was one." The site of neither of them has been discovered as yet. *Azmon* also has not yet been identified.

Verse 5. *The river of Egypt.* The brook of Egypt is the Wady el Arish, which is about seventy miles distant in a westerly direction from Kadesh.

Verse 6. *The great sea, i.e., the Mediterranean.*

*For a border.* Lit., "with its border," i.e., "with the border which it makes."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 7-9. "The northern boundary cannot be determined with certainty."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 7. *Mount Hor.* This is quite distinct from the Mount Hor upon which Aaron died (see p. 363). "The northern boundary started from the sea. Since Sidon was subsequently allotted to the most northern tribe—Asher (Josh. xix. 28), and was, so far as we know, the most northern town so allotted, it would seem probable that the northern boundary would commence at about that point; that is, opposite to where the great range of Lebanon breaks down to the sea. The next

landmark, the entrance to Hamath, seems to have been determined by Dr. Porter as the pass at *Kalat el-Husn*, close to *Hums*, the ancient Hamath—at the other end of the range of Lebanon. Surely Mount Hor, then, can be nothing else than the great chain of Lebanon itself.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 8. *The entrance of Hamath.* Hamath here is the kingdom of Hamath, which was named after its chief city. “By ‘the entrance of Hamath,’ is to be understood the southern approach to Hamath, from the plain of Cœle Syria, lying between those two ranges of Lebanon, called Libanus and Antilibanus. Robinson and Porter understand it of the western approach to Hamath, from the Mediterranean.”—*Speaker's Comm.* See on chap. xiii. 21, p. 228.

“*Zedad*, now a large village, still bearing its ancient name (*Sadad*), about thirty miles east of the entrance of Hamath.”—*Ibid.*

Verse 9. “*Ziphron*, now *Zifrân*, has not been as yet visited by modern travellers, but is reported to lie about forty miles north-east of Damascus, near the road to Palmyra, and to contain extensive ruins.”—*Ibid.*

*Hazar-enan*, = “the fountain village.”

Probably “*Ayûn ed-Dara*, a fountain situate in the very heart of the great central chain of Antilibanus.”—*Ibid.* Most, if not all, of these conjectures or conclusions concerning the northern frontier are, however, disputed.

Verses 10-12. The eastern boundary.

Verse 10. *Shepham*. The site of this place has not been identified.

Verse 11. *Riblah*, on the east side of *Ain*. Not *Riblah* in the land of Hamath. Its exact site is unknown.

*Sea of Chinnereth*, i.e., Sea of Gennesaret, or of Galilee.

Verse 12. *Down to Jordan, &c.* From the sea of Gennesaret the boundary was the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

Verses 13-15. *Unto the nine tribes, &c.* Comp. chap. xxxii. 20-33.

Verses 16-29. Names of the men appointed to distribute the land. Of these, three only are known, viz., Eleazar, the high priest, head of the religious orders; Joshua, the general, head of the military order; and Caleb, the representative prince of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 18. *One prince of every tribe.* These princes were “the heads of the fathers of the tribes” (Josh. xiv. 1), not heads of tribes (see on chap. xiii. 2; p. 228).

## THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1-15.)

Let us consider the following facts which are here either suggested or stated concerning the Promised Land.

I. The boundaries of this land were determined by God.

He here directs His servant Moses in this matter. “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel,” &c. We have in this an illustration of His providential ordering of human life. “He hath determined the bounds of their habitation.” “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” This may be regarded as—

1. *A reason for contentment.* “He

shall choose our inheritance for us.”

“The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (a)

2. *A rebuke of selfish greed*, whether on the part of individuals or of nations. (b)

II. The extent of this land was small.

Authorities are not agreed as to its extent; but even if we take the largest estimate, it was a small land, and remarkably narrow. Mr. Grove thus speaks of its size, and briefly sets forth its boundaries: “The Holy Land is not in size or physical characteristics pro-

portioned to its moral and historical position, as the theatre of the most momentous events in the world's history. It is but a strip of country about the size of Wales, less than 140 miles in length, and barely 40 in average breadth, on the very frontier of the East, hemmed in between the Mediterranean Sea on the one hand, and the enormous trench of the Jordan valley on the other, by which it is effectually cut off from the mainland of Asia behind it. On the north it is shut in by the high ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and by the chasm of the Litâny, which runs at their feet, and forms the main drain of their southern slope. On the south it is no less enclosed by the arid and inhospitable deserts of the upper part of the peninsula of Sinai, whose undulating wastes melt imperceptibly into the southern hills of Judea. . . . . The country thus roughly portrayed, and which, as before stated, is less than 140 miles in length, and not more than 40 in average breadth, is to all intents and purposes the whole Land of Israel. The northern portion is Galilee; the centre, Samaria; the south, Judea. This is the Land of Canaan which was bestowed on Abraham; the covenanted home of his descendants." (*Bibl. Dict.*) Dean Stanley, however, makes it to be larger than this. "The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea, is rarely more than 50 miles. Its length, from Dan to Beersheba, is about 180 miles." But, whatever may be its measurements, the glory of this land consists in its having been the theatre of the most marvellous and momentous events in the history of the world, and is in inverse ratio to its size. (c)

III. The position of this land was secure.

An examination of its boundaries as they are here laid down, shows that it was surrounded by natural fortifications. In one particular only was the position of this land perilous. "The only road by which the two great rivals of the ancient world could approach one another—by which alone Egypt could go to Assyria, and Assyria to

Egypt—lay along the broad flat strip of coast which formed the maritime portion of the Holy Land, and thence by the plain of the Lebanon to the Euphrates." This road was undoubtedly a dangerous one for the Israelites. And through this channel the destruction of the nation came at length. But, with this exception, this land was naturally surrounded by almost impregnable defences. (d)

IV. The soil of this land was fertile.

Its present condition is not to be regarded as a representation of its condition when it was inhabited and cultivated. At present the face of the country presents a rocky and barren aspect. For this there are two causes. "The first is the destruction of the timber in that long series of sieges and invasions which began with the invasion of Shishak (B.C. circa 970), and has not yet come to an end. This, by depriving the soil and the streams of shelter from the burning sun, at once made, as it invariably does, the climate more arid than before, and doubtless diminished the rainfall. The second is the decay of the terraces necessary to retain the soil on the steep slopes of the round hills. This decay is owing to the general unsettlement and insecurity which have been the lot of this poor little country almost ever since the Babylonian conquest. The terraces once gone, there was nothing to prevent the soil which they supported being washed away by the heavy rains of winter; and it is hopeless to look for a renewal of the wood, or for any real improvement in the general face of the country, until they have been first re-established." — *Grove*. Its condition in ancient times is thus portrayed by the inspired lawgiver: "A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains," &c. (*Deut. viii. 7-9*). "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt," &c. (*Deut. xi. 10-12*). (e)

V. The Israelites failed to take possession of the whole of this land assigned to them by God.



The territory here marked out for them greatly exceeded that which they actually conquered. For example, it appears that the north-western boundary was to reach "unto great Zidon" (Josh. xix. 28), but neither that city nor even Tyre, which is about 20 English miles further south, was ever acquired by Israel. Acco was "the northernmost city of the Holy Land on the western coast." In order to discover the difference between the extent of the territory allotted and that actually taken, in this district of the land, contrast Josh. xix. 24-31, and Judg. i. 31, 32. Other instances of the failure of the Israelites to take possession of the territory given to them by God are recounted in Judg. i. 27-36. From this failure arose many of the

sins and sufferings of their subsequent history. In this we have an illustration of the failure of the people of God in this day to rise to the height of their Christian calling, or to realise the fullness and wealth of their Christian privileges. The treasures of the Divine blessing immeasurably exceed our aspiration and faith, and consequently, our realization of them. Comp. Psa. lxxxi. 13-16; Isa. xlviii. 17-19.

*In conclusion*, the subject presents *an impressive illustration of the great goodness of God to His people*. And His goodness is even more manifest in the spiritual privileges and possessions to which He calls us in Jesus Christ. Let us show our appreciation of His goodness by striving to attain unto our high calling.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) On this point we have given illustrations on pp. 43, 70.

(b) The ambition and insatiable greediness of great men hath put all out of order, and nothing is so holy which can stay them creeping and encroaching upon the bounds and borders of their neighbours. Thus they break the law of God and nature, in seeking to enlarge and increase their own dominions. These justly incur the curse of the prophet, "Woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" (Isa. v. 8; Hab. ii. 9-12; Jer. xxii. 23; Mic. ii. 2). For wherefore hath God separated nation from nation, and one kingdom from another people, but that all should live quietly and communicate one with another, and that there might be no confusion or divisions? And, therefore, ought all to be contented with their own bounds. God hath made them great, but they always seek to make themselves greater: He hath set them bounds, but they will know no bounds. So, then, from thence we may gather that the wars which are taken in hand upon ambition, and the enlarging of the bounds of their empire only, are a despising of God, a shedding of innocent blood, and a perverting of the order which He hath set in nature and nations. Every man, therefore, ought to abide in his own possession and inheritance, and not to trouble or molest one another. . .

This reproveth the greedy and covetous affections of private men that covet to be rich, they care not by what means. But as soon as the desire of getting gain is settled in them, they are inflamed to rake to them-

selves by hook or by crook. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live." Covetousness is a corrupt affection of the mind, greedily desiring, and too much gaping after, the riches of this life. They dream of long life, forgetting that no man's life consisteth in the abundance of his riches (Luke xii. 15). They think they shall exceedingly profit them, but by the just judgment of God they turn to their hurt. They think they will be as a shield or buckler to defend them from the injuries of this life, but they are turned into swords whereby they are wounded or destroyed. They have conceived a strong opinion that they will be as a wall on every side to underprop the house, but they prove as a double cannon to cast it down to the ground. As then, he that eateth moderately is nourished by the meat, and it abideth in the stomach, but when it is taken immoderately the stomach is choked, and it is vomited up again; so he that greedily heapeth up riches shall be constrained to "vomit them up again" (Job xx. 15). Covetousness, therefore, is a sin, when a man is discontented with the estate wherein God hath set him, and with those things that God hath given for the sustenance of this present life; when he murmureth against God, and the more he hath, the more he desireth; when he heapeth them up and keepeth them, and bringeth them not forth to any godly or necessary uses; but he distrusteth the Providence of God, and putteth his trust and confidence in his riches, as if he could not live without abundance of them, neither be sustained by the hand of God.—*W. Attersoll*.

(c) In Palestine, as in Greece, every traveller

is struck with the smallness of the territory. He is surprised, even after all that he has heard, in passing, in one long day, from the capital of Judea to that of Samaria; or at seeing, within eight hours, three such spots as Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea is rarely more than fifty miles. Its length from Dan to Beersheba is about a hundred and fifty miles. The time is now gone by when the grandeur of a country is measured by its size, or the diminutive extent of an illustrious people can otherwise than enhance the magnitude of what they have done. The ancient taunt, however, and the facts which suggested it, may still illustrate the feeling which appears in their own records. The contrast between the littleness of Palestine, and the vast extent of the empires which hung upon its northern and southern skirts, is rarely absent from the mind of the Prophets and Psalmists. It helps them to exalt their sense of the favour of God towards their land, by magnifying their little hills and dry torrent beds into an equality with the giant hills of Lebanon and Hermon, and the sea-like rivers of Mesopotamia. It also fosters the consciousness that they were not always to be restrained within these earthly barriers, "The place is too strait for me; give me place where I may dwell" (Isa. xlix. 20). Nor is it only the smallness, but the narrowness, of the territory which is remarkable. From almost every high point in the country its whole breadth is visible, from the long wall of the Moab hills on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Whatever may be the poverty or insignificance of the landscape, it is at once relieved by a glimpse of either of these two boundaries.

"Two voices are there—one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains,"—

and the close proximity of each—the deep purple shade of the one, and the glittering waters of the other—makes it always possible for one or other of those two voices to be heard now, as they were by the Psalmists of old—"The strength of the mountains is His also—The sea is His, and He made it."—*A. P. Stanley, D.D.*

(d) Look at its boundaries. The most important will be that on the east. For in that early time, when Palestine first fell to the lot of the chosen people, the East was still the world. The great empires which rose on the plains of Mesopotamia, the cities of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were literally then, what Babylon is metaphorically in the Apocalypse, the rulers and corrupters of all the kingdoms of the earth. Between these great empires and the people of Israel, two obstacles were interposed. The first was the eastern Desert, which formed a barrier in front even of the outposts of Israel—the nomadic tribes on the east of the Jordan; the second, the vast

fissure of the Jordan valley, which must always have acted as a deep trench within the exterior rampart of the Desert and the eastern hills of the Trans-Jordanic tribes.

Next to the Assyrian empire in strength and power, superior to it in arts and civilization, was Egypt. What was there on the southern boundary of Palestine, to secure that "the Egyptians whom they saw on the shores of the Red Sea, they should see no more again"? Up to the very frontier of their own land stretched that "great and terrible wilderness," which rolled like a sea between the valley of the Nile and the valley of the Jordan. This wilderness itself—the platform of the Tih—could be only reached on its eastern side by the tremendous pass of 'Akaba at the southern, of Sâfeh at the northern end of the 'Arabah, or of the no less formidable ascents from the shores of the Dead Sea.

On these, the two most important frontiers the separation was most complete. The two accessible sides were the west and the north. But the west was only accessible by sea, and when Israel first settled in Palestine, the Mediterranean was not yet the thoroughfare—it was rather the boundary and the terror of the eastern nations. From the north-western coast, indeed, of Syria, the Phœnician cities sent forth their fleets. But they were the exception of the world, the discoverers, the first explorers of the unknown depths; and in their enterprises Israel never joined. In strong contrast, too, with the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, Palestine has no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, such as in ancient, even more than in modern times, were necessary for the invitation and protection of commercial enterprise. One long line, broken only by the bay of Acre, containing only three bad harbours, Joppa, Acre, and Caïpha—the last unknown in ancient times—is the inhospitable front that Palestine opposed to the western world. On the northern frontier the ranges of Lebanon formed two not insignificant ramparts. But the gate between them was open, and through the long valley of Coele-Syria, the hosts of Syrian and Assyrian conquerors accordingly poured. These were the natural fortifications of that vineyard which was "hedged round about" with tower and trench, sea and desert, against the "boars of the wood," and "the beasts of the field."—*Ibid.*

(e) There is this peculiarity which distinguishes Palestine from the only countries with which it could then be brought into comparison. Chaldea and Egypt—the latter of course in an eminent degree—depend on the course of single rivers. Without the Nile, and the utmost use of the waters of the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. But Palestine is well distinguished, not merely as "a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, of oil-olive and honey," but emphatically as "a good land, a land of brooks



of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of plains and mountains,"—"not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but a land of mountains and plains which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." This mountainous character; this abundance of water both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in contradistinction to the one uniform supply of the great river; this abundance of "milk" from its "cattle on a thousand hills," of "honey" from its forests and its thymy shrubs, was absolutely peculiar to Palestine amongst the civilized nations of the East. Feeble as its brooks might be—though, doubtless, they were then more frequently filled than now—yet still it was the only country where an Eastern could have been familiar with the image of the Psalmist: "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the mountains." Those springs, too, however short-lived, are remarkable for their copiousness and beauty. Not only in the East, but hardly in the West, can any fountains and sources of streams be seen so clear, so full-grown even at their birth, as those of the Kishon, the Jordan, and the whole of the Jordan valley. Wales or Westmoreland are, doubtless, not regarded as fertile regions; and the green fields of England to those who have

come fresh from Palestine, seem, by way of contrast, to be indeed "a land of promise." But transplant Wales or Westmoreland into the heart of the Desert, and they would be far more to the inhabitants of the Desert than to their inhabitants are the richest spots of England. Far more: both because the contrast is in itself greater, and because the phenomena of a mountain country, with wells and springs, are of a kind almost unknown to the dwellers in the deserts or river plains of the East.

Palestine therefore, not merely by its situation, but by its comparative fertility, might well be considered the prize of the Eastern world, the possession of which was the mark of God's peculiar favour; the spot for which the nations would contend: as on a smaller scale the Bedouin tribes for some "diamond of the desert," some "palm-grove island amid the waste." And a land of which the blessings were so evidently the gift of God, not as in Egypt of man's labour; which also, by reason of its narrow extent, was so constantly within reach and sight of the neighbouring Desert, was eminently calculated to raise the thoughts of the nation to the Supreme Giver of all these blessings, and to bind it by the dearest ties to the land which He had so manifestly favoured.—*Ibid.*

### THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 16-29.)

The two chief rules for the Distribution of the Land have already been noticed by us (see p. 502). We have here the names of the persons to whom this distribution was committed. Notice,—

I. The co-working of the Divine and the human in the distribution of the land.

1. *Here is the Divine agency.* "This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot" (verse 13); *i.e.*, the situation of the territory of each tribe, and probably of each family, was to be determined by lot. The use of the lot was regarded by most ancient peoples as an appeal to God, and the result was viewed as determined by Him. There are numerous instances of this in Jewish history (Lev. xvi. 8-10; Josh. vii. 14-18; Judg. i. 1-3; xx. 8-10; 1 Sam. x. 20, 21; xiv. 41, 42; 1 Chron. xxiv. 3-31). There is a striking and important example of its use in the very early

Christian Church (Acts i. 24-26). The estimate of it may be gathered from Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18. By its use on this occasion, the families of Israel would regard their respective inheritances as allotted to them by Jehovah.

2. *Here is human agency.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you." The situation of the inheritances having been determined by lot, the extent of the inheritance of each tribe was to be determined according to their respective numbers and needs, by the persons whose names are here recorded. In this, as in many other things, God calls man to work, and to work in harmony with Himself. This is the case in the cultivation of the earth, in working out our own salvation, in the conversion of sinners, &c. We are "workers together with him" (2 Cor. vi. 1). (a)

II. The wise arrangements for the



performance of man's duties in the division of the land.

It is worthy of notice that in the persons appointed to this work—

1. *Each class was represented.* On the commission were "Eleazar the priest," the head of the religious orders; "Joshua the son of Nun," the head of the military order; and "one prince of every tribe," representing the civil order.

2. *Each tribe was represented,* with the exception of Reuben and Gad, which had received their inheritance on the east of the Jordan. This arrangement, by which each class and each tribe was represented on the commission, was calculated to inspire the confidence of the people as to the equitable division of the land, and to prevent dissatisfaction on the part of any tribe or class of the nation.

3. *Faithful services already rendered*

were recognised. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, had already served the nation well and bravely. Their employment on this commission may be viewed—(1) as an acknowledgment of the value of their former services; and (2) as a judicious use of persons of approved fidelity.

4. *Distinguished abilities were called into use.* Joshua and Caleb were not only faithful but remarkably able men. For wisdom and courage they would have been eminent amongst any people. Their abilities would be very valuable in the distribution of the land.

Learn; that in the arrangements for the services of God the highest wisdom should be embodied, and in carrying out those arrangements the most approved fidelity and the most conspicuous ability should be employed. The work of God demands our best efforts both of head and of heart. (b)

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If men say, "You do not believe in conversion," I do. If they say, "You do not believe in conversion by Divine influences," I do. If they say, "But you act as though you were to produce it yourself," I reply, "Not any more than I produce flowers myself." I believe that God made the earth, I believe that He made the seed, I believe that He made the germ in the seed, I believe that He made the sun and the atmospheric conditions needful to the development of that germ, but I believe that I shall have no flowers without my interposition and skilful agency. I prepare the soil, I plant the seed, I remove the weeds from them and nourish them; and yet, after I have done that, I shall not have flowers by any power that is in me. Thou, O Sun! hast alone that secret alchemy, thou alone hast that involving power, by which blossoming can come after my skill ceases, and by which the flower shall reward my toil. And Thou, O Sun of Righteousness! hast alone the power to cause the seed to blossom out. For though man may plant the seed, and till the soil, the final form of development comes from the influence of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul. We work together. Man carries on his work, and God adds His influence; and the two are not in antagonism, but are coincident and co-operative. They are not in conflict, but concurrent. Some men are shocked when we say, "Such a man was converted by the minister." You may say that in an irreverent way, but you may say it so

as to be conformable to truth. I say, "I raised a harvest." A person listening to me says, "No, you did not; God raised it." I say, by way of explanation, "I went out and planted my fields, and brought my orchard into the right condition, and all this wealth of grain and fruit is the result of my painstaking;" and in a proper sense that does not imply conceit or pride, and that does not exclude the agency of nature or the Divine constitution of things. I did raise that harvest. We are accustomed to talk so, and without irreverence; and there is a sense in which I am instrumental in implanting correct views in a soul, and impressing right influences upon it, and it is not irreverent for me to say that I have converted men from the error of their ways.—H. W. Beecher.

(b) Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for Him, and conformable to His law. The dullest and dearest time we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes, and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our heart to God. How few morning sacrifices hath God from many persons and families! Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments without any thought of their Creator and Preserver, or any reflection upon His will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many reserve the dregs of their lives—their old age—to offer up their souls to God, so

they reserve the dregs of the days—their sleeping time—for the offering up their service to Him. How many grudge to spend their best time in serving the will of God, and reserve for Him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives,—the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon! Would

not any prince or governor judge a present, half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? A corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a King as God is, whose name is dreadful. Alas! God calls for our *best*, and we give Him our *worst*!—*Charnocke*.

## CHAPTER XXXV:

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter contains directions for the appointment of (1) cities for the Levites to dwell in; and (2) cities of refuge for the manslayer; and laws concerning wilful murder and unintentional homicide.

Verse 2. *Suburbs*. *Keil and Del.* "Pasturage or fields."

Verse 3. *For their cattle, &c.* "More strictly, 'for their large cattle, for their sheep and goats, and for all their beasts whatsoever they be.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 4, 5. The directions given in these verses as to the extent of the "suburbs" have much perplexed expositors. They seem to us to mean that the suburbs should extend 1,000 cubits, or nearly one-third of a mile, from the city wall in every direction (ver. 4), and that at their outward extremity they should present on every side a frontage of not less than 2,000 cubits in length (ver. 5).

Verse 6. *And to them ye shall add*. Margin: "And above them ye shall give." Or, "and in addition to them," &c.

Verse 8. *From them that have many ye shall give many*. From the large inheritance of Judah and Simeon, the Levites received nine cities; from that of Naphtali three, and four from each of the other tribes. On the east of Jordan they had ten, and in Canaan proper, thirty-eight.

Verse 11. *At unawares*. Margin: "Heb., by error." Or, by accident.

Verse 12. *The avenger*. Heb. *Goël*, redeemer, kinsman, &c. *Stand before the congregation, &c.* Or, "before the assembly," which consisted of the

elders of the city. Comp. verses 24, 25.

Verse 15. *Unawares*. By accident, or, unintentionally.

Verse 16. *Instrument of iron, i.e., a tool, e.g., hatchet, hammer, &c.*

Verse 17. *With throwing a stone*. Margin: "Heb., with a stone of the hand," i.e., a large stone, which filled the hand.

Verse 18. *A hand weapon of wood*. Or, "a wooden instrument of the hand," e.g., a club. "The suspicion would rest upon anyone who had used an instrument that endangered life, and therefore was not generally used in striking, that he had intended to take life away."—*Knobel*.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. Deut. xix. 4, 5.

Verse 25. *He shall abide in it*. He was safe only within the walls of the city.

*Unto the death of the high priest*. "The atoning death of the Saviour casts its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The High Priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the Holy of Holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, pre-eminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high-priest pre-signified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 30. *The murderer shall be put to*

*death.* The cities of refuge were not instituted to screen the guilty from deserved punishment; but to secure a just sentence.

*By the mouth of witnesses, &c.* Comp. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15.

Verse 31. *Satisfaction.* Rather, redemption money, or ransom.

## THE APPOINTMENT OF CITIES FOR THE RESIDENCE OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 1-8.)

The Divine provision for the maintenance of the priests and Levites has already engaged our attention twice (see pp. 84-86, and 339-342); and, in-

asmuch as most of the homiletical suggestions of this paragraph were noticed there, it is needless to point them out in this place.

## REFUGE.

(Verse 6.)

"Among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, there shall be six cities for refuge."

Some types of Christ appeared for a brief season, and then vanished. The guiding cloud, the manna, ended on Jordan's banks. But here is a sign which lived through Canaan's history. It never failed until the Cross was reared.

The story of the ordinance is brief.

Sinner, this type displays your case. The slayer is your counterpart. There may be carnage of duties—talents—time—souls. No day passes in which this guilt is not incurred. As the man-slayer did not plot his deed, so sinners blindly commit these murders through ignorance and unwatched thought.

Take now the sinner awakened to a sense of this guilt. He is, as the slayer, rushing in terror from the kinsman's wrath. He knows himself to be pursued.

One kinsman only hunted the slayer. But many adversaries threaten the guilty soul. God's justice takes the lead. It has strong claims. Its wrongs are many. Its wrath is righteous. The law is in pursuit winged with vengeance. It demands pure, unblemished love, from the cradle to the grave, in every child of man. All who trans-

gress become its prey. And who transgresses not? This law must have its dues. It follows sternly. The truth of God, too, points an inexorable sword. It has decreed that every sinner must die. Can it be false? Satan moreover follows with huge strides. He claims the sinning soul as his. His hate is bitter.

These adversaries rush on apace. Who, undismayed, can hear their near-ing footsteps? Do any cry, Whither shall we flee? Is there a Refuge? Yes. The sheltering cities represent our Refuge. A Refuge is prepared, full—complete—secure. It is Christ the Lord. Flee to Him. All in Him are everlastingly secure. "There is therefore now no condemnation," &c. (Rom. viii. 1).

Let faith now calmly gaze on this city, and mark its towers. Christ's person is the grand pillar of security. While Jesus lives, and lives the mighty God, this safety is complete. His finished work builds up the Refuge. The walls—the bulwarks of this city—are red with blood. There is inscribed above each gate, "Christ died." Justice draws near. It sees this mark; and asks no more. The law's stern curse falls harmless here. Christ receives its weight. Satan pursues up to these gates. But here he pauses. All within



these walls are purified and beautified. We must confess that they are no more his. Blessed be God for this sure Refuge!

Mark, too, this Refuge is at hand. In Israel the slayer had to flee oft-times along a tedious road. Our city stands beside us. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise," &c. (Rom. x. 6-8). The gates are close. Enter this hour.

Believer, you are within this Refuge. Set not one foot beyond the holy precincts. Abide in Christ. Would you be safe through life—in death—for

ever? Then cleave to Christ, as ivy to the tree, as limpet to the rock.

And when you realize your mercies and your safe retreat, can your heart fail to love—your lips to praise—your life to serve? Can you now see such multitudes exposed to wrath, and not allure them to your loved Refuge? Strive by every means to call them in. Above all, agonize in prayer, that God's all-conquering Spirit may fly speedily throughout earth's bounds, opening blind eyes to see their danger, exciting anxious hearts to rush to this only Refuge.—*H. Law, D.D.*

### THE DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 9-34.)

"Human life," to use the words of Dean Milman, "in all rude and barbarous tribes, is of cheap account; blood is shed on the least provocation; open or secret assassination is a common occurrence. The Hebrew penal law enforced the highest respect for the life of man. Murder ranked with high treason (*i.e.*, idolatry, blasphemy), striking a father, adultery, and unnatural lust, as a capital crime: the law demanded blood for blood (Exodus xxi. 12; Lev. xxiv. 17, 21, 22). But it transferred the exaction of the penalty from private revenge, and committed it to the judicial authority. To effect this, it had to struggle with an inveterate though barbarous usage, which still prevails among the Arabian tribes. By a point of honour, as rigorous as that of modern duelling, the nearest of kin is bound to revenge the death of his relation: he is his Goël or blood avenger. He makes no enquiry; he allows no pause; whether the deceased has been slain on provocation, by accident, or of deliberate malice, death can only be atoned by the blood of the homicide. To mitigate the evils of an usage too firmly established to be rooted out, Moses appointed certain cities of refuge, conveniently situated. If the homicide could escape to one of these,

he was safe till a judicial investigation took place. If the crime was deliberate murder, he was surrendered to the Goël; if justifiable or accidental homicide, he was bound to reside within the sanctuary for a certain period; should he leave it and expose himself to the revenge of his pursuers, he did so at his own peril, and might be put to death."

The various provisions of this law afford an impressive illustration of the Divine regard for human life.

I. In the institution of the cities of refuge as a provision that the life of an innocent person should not be taken away.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (Verses 9-15, 22-25).

The adaptation of these cities for this purpose appears in—

1. *Their accessibility from all places.* "Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge." "And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7, 8). A reference to the map of Canaan will show that these cities were so situated that one of them could be reached in a few hours from any part of the country.

2. *Their accessibility to all persons.*

"These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither." God's regard is not simply for the life of the Israelite, but for the life of man as man.

II. In the laws by which the trial of the manslayer was to be conducted.

The Divine guardianship of human life is manifested in these laws at least in two respects:

1. *In the clear discrimination between intentional and unintentional manslaughter.* "If he smite him with an instrument," &c. (vers. 16-24).

2. *In the absolute necessity for the evidence of at least two witnesses before a man could be adjudged guilty of murder.* "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die" (ver. 30; comp. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15). One witness might be mistaken in his view of the case, or might be prejudiced against the homicide; hence the importance of the testimony of at least two witnesses in the trial of such cases.

III. In the punishment of the intentional manslayer.

"The murderer shall surely be put to death" (vers. 16, 17, 18, 21, 30). As an evidence of the regard of God for human life, this punishment has additional weight from two facts:—

1. *It could not be averted by any ransom.* "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death." The crime was too heinous to be expiated by anything less than life itself.

2. *It was insisted upon for the most solemn reason.* "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it

defileth the land," &c. (vers. 33, 34). The argument seems to be this: that the shedding of human blood defiled the land, that such defilement could be cleansed only by the blood of the murderer; that the Lord Himself dwelt in that land, and therefore it must be kept free from defilement; if murder were committed, the murderer must be put to death. To spare the life of the murderer was to insult Jehovah by defiling the land wherein He dwelt.

IV. In the punishment of the unintentional manslayer.

"The congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood," &c. (vers. 25-28). When it was proved on the trial that the manslayer was perfectly free from guilty designs, that he had slain another entirely by accident, even then he had to bear no light punishment. He must leave his estate and his worldly interests, his home and his family, and dwell in the city of refuge. His dwelling there closely resembled imprisonment; for if he left the city, and its divinely appointed suburbs, the Goëh, if he should come upon him, was at liberty to put him to death. He must remain there throughout his life, or until the death of the high priest should bring him release.

What striking witness does all this bear to the sacredness of human life in the sight of God! (a)

Conclusion.

i. *Respect human life*—that of others, and your own also. (b)

ii. *Guard against anger*; for it leads to murder, and in the estimation of Heaven it is murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15).

iii. *Cultivate brotherly kindness and Christian charity.* Where these are, anger cannot come.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In the precepts delivered to the sons of Noah, and, therefore, through them, to all their descendants, that is, to all mankind, that against murder is thus delivered: "Whoso

sheddeh man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). There is in this reason a manifest reference to the dignity put upon

human nature, by its being endowed with a rational and immortal spirit. The crime of murder is made to lie, therefore, not merely in the putting to death the animal part of man's nature, for this is merged in a higher consideration, which seems to be, the indignity done to the noblest of the works of God; and, particularly, the value of life to an immortal being, accountable in another state for the actions done in this, and which ought, for this very reason, to be specially guarded, since death introduces him into changeless and eternal relations, which were not to lie at the mercy of human passions. Such moralists as the writer above quoted (Dr. Whately), would restrain in the essential characteristics of an act of murder to the "hurt done to a neighbour in depriving him of life," and the "insecurity" inflicted upon society; but in this ancient and universal law, it is made eminently to consist in contempt of the image of God in man, and its interference with man's immortal interests and relations as a deathless spirit; and, if so, then suicide bears upon it these deep and awful characteristics of murder. It is much more wisely said by Bishop Kidder, in his remarks upon this passage, that the reason given—"for in the image of God made He man"—is a further aggravation of the sin of murder. It is a great trespass upon God, as it destroys His likeness; and self-murder, upon this account, is forbidden as well as the killing of others.—*Richard Watson.*

But more than this. Man, the immortal, is man, the sinful, the guilty; and for this immortal, sinful, guilty creature, a Saviour has been provided; and it depends on his having, or not having, an interest in this Saviour, whether his never-ending existence is to be one of happiness or woe. And it is now, and here—in the present life and the present world, that this interest in the Saviour must be effected, this connection with Him formed. And it is here, and now, too, that a certain change of heart and character must be wrought, a change such as alone can fit for the only description of happiness that is at all to be found in the world, and the eternity beyond. How precarious, then, is life! Short, vain, passing as it is, a vapour, a shadow, a handbreadth, a dream! Yet, viewed in this, its relation to eternity, it acquires a worth which it is far beyond all the powers of human arithmetic to compute. And it becomes, in this view of it, the more solemnly important that, though brief even when most protracted, its limit, in each case, is every moment uncertain. For when the time is precarious on which any great event materially affecting our interests depends, and every moment may be that which is to determine for us the evil or the good, the preciousness of every moment is mightily, oppressively felt. With the sarcastic coolness of a scoffing scepticism, Mr. Hume asks: "Where is the crime of diverting

a few ounces of blood from their channel?" The question is based on the assumption of there being no hereafter; no deathless spirit lodged in the frame through which that blood circulates; no moral accountableness; no judgment to come. It is the language of a narrow-minded, heartless materialism. It is the language of an ethereal spirit endowed with divine capacities, and prostituting its Heaven-bestowed powers to disprove its own immortality; to rob itself of the highest elements of its dignity; to disfranchise itself of the noblest of its chartered privileges; to debase itself to a level with the "beasts that perish."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) On suicide, our modern moralists have added little to what is advanced by the ethical writers of Greece and Rome to prove its unlawfulness; for, though suicide was much practised in those ancient states, and sometimes commended, especially by the Stoics, it was occasionally condemned. "We men," says Plato, "are all by the appointment of God in a certain prison or custody, which we ought not to break out of or run away." So likewise Cicero: "God, the Supreme Governor of all things, forbids us to depart hence without His order. All pious men ought to have patience to continue in the body, as long as God shall please who sent us hither; and not force themselves out of the world before He calls for them, lest they be found deserters of the station appointed them by God." . . .

Whatever weight may be due to the considerations urged by moralists against this crime—and every motive which may deter men from listening to the first temptation to so direful an act, is important—yet the guards of Christianity must be acknowledged to be of a more powerful kind. For the principles of our religion cannot be understood without our perceiving, that, of almost all other crimes, wilful suicide ought most to be dreaded. It is a sin against God's authority. He is "the God of our life"; in "His hand our breath is"; and we usurp His authority when we presume to dispose of it. As resulting from the pressure of mortifications of spirit, or the troubles of life, it becomes a sin, as arraigning His providential wisdom and goodness. It implies either an atheistic denial of God's government, or a rebellious opposition to His permissive acts or direct appointments; it cannot be committed, therefore, when the mind is sound, but in the absence of all the Christian virtues, of humility, self-denial, patience, and the fear and love of God, and only under the influence of pride, worldliness, forgetfulness of God, and contempt of Him. It hides from the mind the realities of a future judgment, or it defies them; and it is consummated by the character of unpardonableness, because it places the criminal at once beyond the reach of mercy.—*Richard Watson.*



## THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 9-34.)

There are certain respects in which the analogy between the cities of refuge and the salvation offered to man in the Gospel does not hold good; e.g.—

i. *The cities of refuge afforded no lasting protection to the guilty.* By their means a fair trial was secured for the manslayer; but if he was found guilty of murder, he was given up to the Goël to be put to death. They were an abiding refuge for those only who had accidentally slain a fellow creature. But Christianity is a refuge for the guilty. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom," saith St. Paul, "I am chief." "This man receiveth sinners." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." The guiltiest soul that flies to Jesus Christ is inviolably secure.

ii. *The cities of refuge did not exempt even the unintentional manslayer from death, but simply postponed it.* They rescued him from the vengeance of the Goël; but they could not screen him from that death which "is appointed unto all men." But the spiritual death, which is the penalty of sin, Christianity abolishes for the believer by bestowing upon him a life which is immortal and blessed. In the city of refuge the unintentional manslayer obtained bodily security for a time; in Christ the guilty sinner obtains spiritual security and joy for ever.

There are other respects in which the analogy is not quite complete; but in three most conspicuous features it is both clear and striking.

## I. A great peril.

Under this head there are three points of resemblance.

1. *A broken law.* The manslayer had broken the law which guards human life. "Thou shalt not kill." Every man has transgressed the holy law of God in some respects. "All have sinned," &c. (Rom. iii. 23). "If we say

that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," &c. (1 John i. 8, 10).

2. *The penalty of death.* "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." "The murderer shall surely be put to death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (a)

3. *The peril of the exaction of the penalty.* The Goël of the slain person allowed no time to elapse before setting forth to avenge the death on the manslayer; and if he overtook him before he gained the city of refuge, he put him to death. The manslayer was fleeing for his very life. And the dire penalties of sin follow hard upon the heels of the sinner. Conscience pursues him with its condemnations, and will not be silenced. Divine Justice follows him closely, crying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And the wrath of God, which burns with unquenchable fire against sin, speeds swiftly on the track of the guilty sinner. (b)

## II. A gracious provision.

By Divine command six cities were appointed cities of refuge; to either of these the manslayer might flee, &c.

1. *The provision was of Divine appointment.* "Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan," &c. It was this fact, that they were appointed by God's command, that made these cities a secure refuge for the homicide;—not the strength of their gates or walls, not the authority of their governors, but the authority of Him who had instituted them for this purpose. Jesus Christ is the Refuge appointed by God for the sinner. "The redemption that

is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," &c. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, a Prince and a Saviour," &c. Hence, they who flee to Him are perfectly secure. (c)

2. *The provision was adequate to the need.* Six cities were appointed; and were quite sufficient for the entire country. In each there was ample room, &c. The provisions of Christianity for the salvation of the sinner are enough for all the needs of all men in all ages and all lands. "A great multitude which no man could number" have found a secure and blessed refuge in Jesus Christ; "and yet there is room."

3. *The provision was accessible from all places.* Three measures were adopted to secure this:—(1) The cities were suitably situated, "They appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7-9). Our Saviour is everywhere present. He is a Refuge always near. (2) The roads leading to these cities were kept in good condition. Moses "took care," says Dr. Jahn, "that roads leading to them in straight lines should be laid out in every direction, which were to be distinguished from other streets." (Comp. Deut. xix. 3.) And, according to the Talmudists, (3) where two or more roads met, posts were put up with the word מִקְדָּשׁ, REFUGE, clearly marked on them for the direction of the fugitive. All this may be viewed as illustrating the accessibility of Jesus Christ to the sinner. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?" &c. (Rom. x. 6-9).

4. *The provision was accessible to all persons.* "These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them;" &c. They were accessible to every person in the land. Jesus Christ "is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. iv. 10). "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish," &c. (John iii. 15-17). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference," &c. (Rom. x. 11-13). (d)

5. *The provision was exclusive.* No

other city, except the six appointed ones, had authority to shelter and protect the manslayer. For the sinner there is no refuge but Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. (Acts iv. 12).

### III. The urgent obligation.

The cities of refuge were of no advantage to the manslayer unless he gained an entrance into one of them before the Goël overtook him. It was his highest interest and imperative duty to make his way to the nearest city of refuge. It is yet more the duty and interest of the sinner to hasten to the Lord Jesus as his refuge. This obligation is—

1. *Personal.* No one could escape to the city of refuge for the homicide; he must go himself, or be put to death. Salvation is a personal concern and duty. Repentance, faith, self-consecration, are things which no one can do for another. "Work out your own salvation," &c.

2. *Prompt.* The manslayer had to escape at once or to perish. To linger was to be lost. Salvation must be sought at once. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow," &c.

3. *Pressing.* The manslayer may not loiter on the way, or slacken his pace until he was safe within the city. The words which were addressed to Lot were applicable to him: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee," &c. (Gen. xix. 17). And the sinner must put forth earnest effort. Christ must be sought zealously and with all the heart. (Comp. Jer. xxix. 12, 13.) Salvation must be pursued diligently. "So run, that ye may obtain," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 24-27). "Fight the good fight of faith," &c. "Let us lay aside every weight," &c. "Give diligence to make your calling," &c.

4. *Persevering.* The homicide must press eagerly on until he entered the city. There was no safety for him if he stopped short of the end. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Hasten, then, O sinner! to the Refuge, &c.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If then you have come short of the glory of God, you must be lost; it cannot be denied, nor disputed. *I tell to every man now present, that he is guilty of sinning against the Almighty*—that if there be no intervention of mercy so mighty and so majestic as to satisfy the demands of justice, to quench her fire, and sheathe her sword—if there be not mercy, free, boundless, omnipotent, and eternal, every human being will stand before the judgment bar of God to receive the sentence of his condemnation. He must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; and he must go down to those abodes of torment where there are agonies unspeakable and inconceivable; where the smoke of torment ascendeth up for ever and for ever. Go, my hearers, to the brink of eternity, contemplate in imagination the scenes of that horrible pit which the word of revelation has presented to your view—contemplate the worm that dieth not—contemplate the fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels—contemplate the blackness of darkness—contemplate the smoke of torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever! What was it that gave to that worm its fang but *sin*? What was it that gave to that fire its intensity but *sin*? What was it that gave to that blackness its shadows but *sin*? What was it that gave to that torment its woe but *sin*? The voice is from the abyss uttering one wild cry, "It was sin; *it was sin*; IT WAS SIN!" Man *would* sin, and therefore man *must* suffer. There is a rigid equity between the one and the other. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—James Parsons.

(b) No closer doth the shadow follow the body than the revenge of self-accusation follows sin. Walk eastward in the morning, the shadow starts behind thee; soon after it is upon thy left side; at noon it is under thy feet; lie down, it crouches under thee; towards even it leaps before thee. Thou canst not be rid of it while thou hast a body and the sunlight. No more can thy soul quit the conscience of evil. This is to thee instead of a hell of fiends, that shall ever be shaking firebrands at thee; ever torturing thee with affrights of more pains than thy nature can comprehend.—Hall.

(c) In Samoa, the manslayer, or the deliberate murderer, flies to the house of the chief of the village, or to the house of the chief of another village to which he is related by the father's or the mother's side. In nine cases

out of ten, he is perfectly safe if he only remains there. In such instances, the chief delights in the opportunity of showing his importance. In Samoa, a chief's house is literally his fortification, except in times of open rebellion and actual war.—G. Turner, LL.D.

(d) Our Lord is the Saviour of all men, for that He hath rendered all men *salvabiles*, capable of salvation; and *salvandos*, designed to salvation, for that He hath removed all obstacles peremptorily debarring men from access to salvation, and hath procured competent furtherances to their attainment of it. He hath performed whatever on His part is necessary or fit in order to salvation, antecedently to the acceptance and compliance with those reasonable conditions, which by God's wisdom are required toward the instating men into a full and immediate right to salvation, or to a complete and actual fruition thereof. He made the way to happiness plain and passable; levelling the in-uperable cliffs, and filling up the chasms, and rectifying the obliquities, and smoothing the asperities thereof, as the prophet foretold; so that all men, who would, might conveniently walk therein. He set the doors of paradise wide open, so that who pleased might enter therein; all the bonds and restraints under which men lay, He so far loosed, that any man might be free, who would concur to his own liberty and enlargement. All the protection and encouragement which were needful toward obtaining salvation, He afforded and exhibited to every one that would embrace and make use of them. In respect to which performances He might be truly called a *Saviour*, although all men do not in effect become saved. For the estimation and denomination of performances are to be grounded upon their own nature and design, not upon events depending upon the contingent and arbitrary behaviour of men. As he that freely offers a rich boon is no less to be accounted a benefactor, and liberal, although his gift be refused, than if it were accepted; as he that opens the prison is to be styled a deliverer, although the captive will not go forth; as he that ministers an effectual remedy, although the patient will not use it, deserves the honour and thanks due to a physician; so is our Lord in regard to what He hath performed for men, and offered to them (being sufficient to prevent their misery and promote their happiness), to be thankfully acknowledged their Saviour, although not all men, yea although not one man, should receive the designed benefit.—Isaac Barrow, D.D.



THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AS LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS, AND AS  
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

(Verses 9-15.)

The system of redemption as revealed in the Gospel is often exhibited to our notice as bearing decisive marks of Divine wisdom. It is styled "the wisdom of God"—"the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom . . . which none of the princes of this world knew." The Apostle thus intimates to us that the Gospel would bear the closest inspection in all its parts; that it was worthy of our admiration, as well as of our love; that our redemption was not to be effected either by blind force, or by blind affection; that it should be accomplished in such a manner as that no rights were to be compromised, no perfections outraged, no interests overlooked, but, on the contrary, that a perfect harmony and balance should be maintained between the apparently rival attributes of the Divine character, and the apparently rival interests of earth and Heaven. Thus God was to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; Mercy and Truth were to meet together; Christ crucified in humility and weakness was to present a most eminent illustration both of the wisdom and of the power of God; and thus the countless multitudes saved by grace should have reason to exclaim in time and eternity—Herein "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence!"

But while these remarks are readily admitted respecting the Christian dispensation, they might be extended with equal propriety to the Jewish dispensation also. While the Gospel claims our homage on account of the wisdom it displays, we are prepared to make a similar demand on behalf of the Law. Both are the product of the same Author; both are the offspring of the same covenant of mercy; both conduce to the same happy result; and, though the Gospel confessedly has "the glory that excelleth," yet the same authority

assures us that "that which is done away was glorious" also. There are two points of view expressly in which wisdom shines in the departed economy:—

First: *As its leading institutions were particularly adapted to the state of the Jews in the infancy of the Church.* Their ceremonial rites and observances were particularly suited to the climate in which they lived, to the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the evils to which they were exposed. Ignorant and uncultivated as they were during their four hundred years' bondage, they required a religion addressed to the senses, as well as to the intellect; and hence they have a visible glory, "a worldly sanctuary," animal sacrifices, symbolical institutions. Having recently been brought out of the midst of an idolatrous people, many of their regulations were intended to preserve them from a relapse into idolatry, and to keep constantly before them the worship of one God, and faith in a promised Messiah. And having to wander for forty years in the wilderness without fixed habitations, without regular communities, and without the arts and ornaments of life, some laws were enacted suited to their unsettled condition, and some preparatory to their establishment in the Promised Land. In many instances Moses adapted himself to the customs and usages which had prevailed among them from patriarchal times; in some, his institutions were altogether new; in all, there was a perpetual reference to their moral and religious interests—to encourage virtue, to diminish crime, to induce them to walk humbly with God.

Secondly: *As it was expressly calculated to point to the coming of Christ, and introduce the Gospel dispensation.* The Law was a shadow—a figure for the time then present—a schoolmaster

to bring them to Christ. Unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as unto us. Their history in the wilderness and their worship in the Temple alike prefigured the times of the Messiah. Their sacrifices pointed to Him; the "Rock that followed them" was a type of Him; the scapegoat, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, and the manna in the wilderness, prefigured the nature of His offices, the design of His death, or the spiritual blessings of His kingdom.

These observations apply with peculiar force to our present subject—the *Cities of Refuge*. As civil appointments, they were calculated to prevent much mischief and misery; as religious ordinances, they serve to illustrate Gospel blessings. We shall consider them—

I. As legislative enactments adapted to the habits and customs of an Eastern people in an early age of the world.

Two things require notice—

1. *The office of the avenger of blood and the evils consequent upon it.* This office probably had a very early origin: it may be a relic of the earliest state of civil society, for where there was no magistrate or public tribunal, murders would have been frequently perpetrated had there been no process of this kind among surviving relatives. Cain evidently was in dread of summary vengeance for his murder of Abel. (Comp. Gen. iv. 14.) Rebecca probably dreaded a similar retaliation in case Esau had murdered Jacob; for "why," says she, "should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" It has been common among the wandering Arabs from Ishmael's time to the present hour. It probably arose out of the original law,—“At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man,” &c. (Gen. ix. 5, 6).

It is evident that such a practice must give rise to many very serious evils. Besides that it fostered a spirit of relentless hatred and revenge, it was often accompanied with flagrant injustice and wrong. The Goël is governed only by his passions; and it may be

that the person he suspects is not the murderer; thus an innocent person suffers, and instead of avenging one murder he commits a second. One such deed never fails to give birth to another; and so ten murders have not unfrequently their origin in one. The families on both sides take part in the quarrel, and thus under the pious pretext of avenging innocent blood, two families may be in a state of constant warfare, and transmit feuds and enmities from father to son, even to the tenth generation. Thus the office of the avenger of blood, though proper in some states of society, was subject to many abuses, and required to be placed under strong restrictions. Moses could not have abolished it altogether, at least on a sudden, he therefore adopted regulations which neutralised the evil.

2. *The appointment of the cities of refuge, in order to secure the ends, both of mercy and of justice.* Six cities of refuge were appointed—three on the one side of Jordan, three on the other—to which the manslayer might immediately repair, and in which the individual might be safe, &c. . . . Thus provision was made both for justice and mercy—for justice if the fugitive were guilty, for mercy if he were innocent. And in order to give the innocent person every reasonable hope of escaping, the cities were placed at easy distances, to which persons might have access from any part of the land, the roads were straight and plain, &c. . . .

But even in the mercy that was shown an accidental manslayer, we see how sacred life was in God's esteem; for the fugitive must be a prisoner and an exile, apart from all his friends, till the death of the High Priest, perhaps for many years. This was intended to punish that imprudence which had cost another man his life, and could not fail to make the people cautious against the recurrence of such accidents; for as no compensation could be taken for the life of a murderer, so no sum could rescue an innocent manslayer from the city (vers. 31, 32).

II. As a religious ordinance designedly employed by the apostle to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God in the methods of our salvation.

Here we see clearly depicted the character and office of our great Redeemer. This Redeemer is our near Kinsman; for "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." To this the apostle alludes: "God sent forth His Son made of a woman," &c. (Gal. iv. 4, 5). This illustrates the sublime passage in the book of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. He is here compared to the Goël, &c. (Comp. Hos. xiii. 14; Zech. ix. 12.) The apostle says: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him," for which, like the manslayer, he would count all things loss. And he describes Christians as having "fled for refuge." "There is

therefore now no condemnation," &c.

1. *A state of exposure is implied.* Every man who reflects upon his past life, upon the holiness of God's law, upon the inflexibility of His government, and upon the sentence He has pronounced against sin, must be aware that he is in a state of jeopardy. The sentence has been promulgated from age to age with awful solemnity, "Cursed is every one," &c. If we carry the thought to its extent, it is Jehovah Himself who is the Avenger. His law we have broken, &c.

2. *A method of rescue has been provided.* Christ has undertaken our desperate cause. We are to flee for refuge. It is the only one. It is open to the Gentile as well as the Jew.

. . . . .  
Samuel Thodey.

### THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO FLEE TO THE CITY OF REFUGE.

(Verses 24-28.)

That the Mosaic law had a spiritual meaning, is placed beyond all doubt from the clear allusions of Scripture (Zech. ix. 12; Heb. vi. 18). Observe—

I. Our natural state is one of imminent danger.

We are all criminals, having, ignorantly and in unbelief, rebelled against the Almighty Sovereign. As criminals, we are justly exposed to the infliction of the threatened penalty of death (Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. vi. 23; Rev. xxi. 8). Truly, then, we may observe in the situation of the manslayer a great resemblance to that of our own, as pursued by the inexorable Justice of One whose wrath we have so much provoked (Rom. i. 18; John iii. 36).

II. Nothing can deliver us from this danger but a zealous and timely flight.

We may sit at ease, bless ourselves in our heart, and feel secure; but if death overtakes us loitering in our sins, we must perish in them; and it will be vain to trust to anything as our covenant and hope, so long as we re-

main under that indifference to our spiritual interests, which demonstrates us to be still unchanged (James ii. 10).

III. There is a place of safety to which we can flee.

Christ is our refuge:—

1. *A Refuge Divinely appointed.* God so pitied, so deeply and intensely compassionated our state, as to plan and provide a way of deliverance for us by His only begotten Son (John iii. 16).

2. *A Refuge free and open to all.* None are shut out from it, but those who, by their impenitence and obstinacy, shut out themselves. No stage, no state of guilt, can make any difference; but sinners of every rank and description, without limitation or reserve, have a place prepared in which they may find security (1 Cor. vi. 11).

3. *A Refuge everywhere near to resort to.* Christ is set before us in the Gospel, and to find Him we need neither climb up into heaven, nor descend into the bottom of the sea (Rom. x. 8).

4. *A Refuge easily accessible.* Every obstacle is effectually removed, God



being reconciled, His justice satisfied, and His law magnified; so that nothing need hinder our trusting in Christ, the great God, and our Saviour.

5. *A Refuge containing an ample supply for our wants and necessities.* For here are to be found wisdom, grace, life, liberty, peace, and joy.

IV. Having once entered this place we must abide there.

It was not enough that the man-slayer fled to the city of refuge. Having gained this place, he must remain

in it till the death of the high priest. Nor is it sufficient to have once believed in Christ. We must abide in Him, renouncing for ever all thoughts of going into any forbidden region (Isa. xxx. 15). And woe be unto us, if we dare to be found without (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Let us hence seek after a sight of our danger, abandon all means of relief not warranted in the Scripture, and resign ourselves up to Christ.—*William Sleight.*

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE LAW FOR THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSSES.

(Verses 1-12.)

Let us notice—

#### I. The case stated.

"And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir," &c. (vers. 1-4). The daughters of Zelophehad were heiresses, according to the law stated in chapter xxvii. 1-11 (see pp. 509, 510). There was a probability of their marriage, and it might have been to persons of some of the other tribes. (a) And, as Matthew Henry points out, it is probable that the heads of the tribe of Manasseh knew, that "at this time, great court was made to them by some young gentlemen of other tribes, because they were heiresses, that they might get footing in this tribe, and so enlarge their own inheritance. This truly is often aimed at more than it should be in making marriages, not the meetness of the person, but the convenience of the estate, to 'lay house to house and field to field.' 'Wisdom indeed is good with an inheritance;' but what is an inheritance good for in that relation without wisdom? But here, we may presume, the personal merit of these daughters recommended them as well as their fortunes." But if they married to persons of another tribe, their inheritance would pass away

from the tribe of Manasseh to the tribe or tribes to which their husbands belonged. It was in order to guard against this that the heads of the fathers' houses of the family of Gilead the Manassite appealed unto Moses. In so doing they were actuated, not by selfish concern for their personal interests. Their respective inheritances would not be diminished by the marriage of these heiresses. But they urged that, if they married to persons of any of the other tribes,—(1) The Divine allotment of the land would be invaded. "They said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel," &c. (2) The territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh would be diminished. "If they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes," &c. (vers. 3, 4). In this way the wealth and importance and power of the half-tribe would be lessened.

These proceedings of the heads of this family were orderly, respectful, reasonable, and commendable.

#### II. The case adjudicated.

"And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord," &c. (vers. 5-9).

##### 1. *The righteousness of the case was*

*acknowledged.* "The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well." The conduct of the elders was commended, &c.

2. *The difficulty of the case was removed.* The law by which the difficulty was removed comprised two simple clauses:—(1) That the daughters of Zelophehad were not to be coerced in marriage. "This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best." "Now if God left them to their liking," asks Bishop Babington, "should men force their children against all love and liking? No, no, it is a sin, and not a small one, bitter to the child all the days of life, and not very sweet to the parents after they see the fruits of their violence. Let children dutifully regard parents, and parents charitably and religiously regard their children, who will beg with better will where they like than live without love in world's abundance. We have known too often the child cry, the father cry, and the mother die for this fault, when it was too late." (b) (2) That the daughters of Zelophehad were to marry persons of their own tribe. "Only to the family of the tribe of their fathers shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance," &c. Thus, while the former provision secured to them freedom in their marriages, this provision, by restricting the extent of their

choice, secured their inheritance to the tribe of Manasseh.

3. *The decision in this case was made the law for all similar cases.* "And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe," &c. (vers. 8, 9).

4. *The decision of this case was of Divine authority.* "Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, . . . This is the thing which the Lord doth command," &c. Hence the decision was binding both in the case which gave rise to it, and in all similar cases in subsequent times.

### III. The adjudication acted upon.

"Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad," &c. (vers. 10-12). "They married their fathers' brothers' sons. By this it appears," says Matthew Henry,—

"1. *That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful*, nor within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But,

"2. *That ordinarily it is not advisable*; for, if there had not been a particular reason for it (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven), they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly will endeavour to walk surely."

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Marriage has in it less of beauty, but more of safety, than the single life; it hath not more ease, but less danger; it is more merry and more sad; it is fuller of sorrows and fuller of joys; it lies under more burdens, but is supported by all the strengths of love and charity; and these burdens are delightful. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities and churches, and heaven itself. Celibacy, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined, and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and

promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

(b) The marriage life is always an *insipid*, a *veratious*, or a *happy* condition. The first is, when two people of no genius or taste for themselves meet together, upon such a settlement as has been thought reasonable by parents and conveyancers, from an exact valuation of the land and cash of both parties. In this case, the young lady's person is no more regarded than the house and improvements in purchase of an estate; but she goes with her fortune, rather than her fortune with her. These make up the crowd or vulgar of the rich, and fill up the lumber of the human race, without beneficence towards those below them, or respect towards those above them.

The *veracious* life arises from a conjunction of two people of quick taste and resentment put together for reasons well known to their friends, in which especial care is taken to avoid (what they think the chief of evils) poverty, and insure to them riches, with every evil besides. These good people live in a constant constraint before company, and too great familiarity alone. When they are within observation, they fret at each other's carriage and behaviour; when alone, they revile each

other's person and conduct. In company, they are in purgatory; when only together, in a hell.

The *happy* marriage is where two persons meet and voluntarily make choice of each other, without principally regarding or neglecting the circumstances of fortune or beauty. These may still love in spite of adversity or sickness: the former we may, in some measure, defend ourselves from; the other is the portion of our very make.—*Sir R. Steele.*

## MARRIAGE.

(Verse 6.)

We may notice briefly, by way of introduction,—

i. *That marriage is a Divine institution.* It was ordained by God (Gen. i. 26-28; ii. 18-24; 1 Cor. xi. 9). It was solemnly confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xix. 3-12), and by His Apostles (1 Cor. vii. 2; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

ii. *That the obligations involved in marriage are binding and sacred.* Marriage itself is not obligatory. There are circumstances in which celibacy is undoubtedly commendable (Matt. xix. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 8). But when the marriage relation has been entered into, obligations of the most tender and sacred character have been incurred. These obligations are not simply those imposed by the civil authority, but those which pertain to it as an ordinance of God: Divine in its origin, it is Divine also in its obligations (Gen. ii. 18, 24; Mal. ii. 14-16; Matt. xix. 4-6; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

But, to confine ourselves to the text, two observations are here warranted on marriage in general:—

I. *That persons should not be coerced in marriage.*

"This is the thing which the Lord doth command. . . . saying, Let them marry to whom they think best." Here we have—

1. *Personal choice as opposed to compulsion.* Parents "who force their daughters into marriage," said Lord Rochester, "are worse than the Ammonites, who sacrificed their children

to Moloch—the latter undergoing a speedy death; the former suffering years of torture, but too frequently leading to the same result."

"For marriage is a matter of more worth  
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship;  
For what is wedlock forced but a hell,  
An age of discord and continual strife?  
Whereas the contrary bringeth forth  
happiness,  
And is a pattern of celestial bliss."  
—*Shakespeare.*

Moreover, such coercion is a sad degradation of marriage; a grievous wrong to the persons coerced; and a heinous sin against God. But further, it seems to us that the text suggests that marriage should be entered into from—

2. *Personal affection as opposed to mere convenience.* In the clause now under consideration, it is the person, not the property, which is spoken of. "Let them marry to whom they think best." Marriage is far too sacred a thing to be treated as a matter of mere convenience and arrangement. "I regard a man and a woman that come together in the marriage state as coming together in the most sacred of all possible conjunctions before God." And to enter into this union without pure and strong affection, is an injury to the person married, and, as we said of marriage by coercion, a degradation of marriage itself, and a sin against God. (a)

II. *That there are important considerations which should regulate the choice in respect to marriage.*

One such consideration is mentioned



in the text. The daughters of Zelophead must marry whom they liked best; but they were not to marry any one of another tribe; for if they did so they would injure their own tribe by diminishing its Divinely allotted territory. "Only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry." The inference is a just one, that while persons are to be free in their marriage, they are not to be rash or thoughtless; they should not overlook either their own true interests or the interests of others. (b) In the marriage choice, due weight should be given to considerations—

1. *As to property.* By this we do not mean that in marriage, money or other possessions should be a primary consideration, or that persons should not marry until they are in "well to-do" or easy circumstances. (c) But in marriage persons should pay due attention to the temporal interests of themselves and their families. No one is at liberty to injure by his marriage the interests of his family or of others. On this point the teaching of our text is indisputable.

2. *As to consanguinity.* In the Bible marriage is prohibited between "any that are near of kin" (Lev. xviii. 1-18), with the exception of first cousins; and marriage between them as a rule is not desirable. (d)

3. *As to health.* Persons having within them the seeds of hereditary disease, should think long and deeply and unselfishly before they determine to enter the marriage state. It is an

awful thing for any one to transmit disease to the next generation in his own children.

4. *As to suitability.* This applies to age, to tastes, to tempers, to station, to pursuits. In innumerable instances where there has been no open disagreement, no bitterness or strife, lives have been impoverished, disappointed, and beclouded by unsuitable marriages. (e)

5. *As to character.* The rule for Christians is expressly laid down by St. Paul: "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39). And expositors, both ancient and modern, are almost universally agreed that the expression "only in the Lord," means, "within the limits of Christian connexion. . . . let her marry a Christian" (*Alford*) And Barnes: "That is, only to one who is a Christian; with a proper sense of her obligations to Christ, and so as to promote His glory." Many and weighty reasons may be adduced to enforce this. We mention only two—(1) In marriages in which this rule is violated, the deepest and holiest aspects of the relationship are unrealised; because in such unions there can be no mutual sympathy on those subjects which are most important and most precious to the heart of the Christian. (2) Such unions involve the most serious peril to the Christian character. (f)

Consider well the ancient inquiry, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And let Christians "marry to whom they will; only in the Lord."

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) How thoroughly unprincipled are frequently the inducements to this connexion. I denounce every marriage as unprincipled that is not based on mutual esteem and love—every marriage that is not a *bona-fide* union of hearts. When such a connection is entered into for the sake of external symmetry and beauty merely, the selection being made solely by the eye, which sees no more, and looks for no more, than the well-proportioned form or "the blooming tincture of the skin," without regard to the qualities of the mind and heart,

"the spirit of the union" is, in such cases, a false fire, without the hallowed purity and warmth of genuine heart love: and it is many a chance to one that it speedily cools down even to extinction, leaving only the cold, heartless, lifeless form, without a spark of the living and glowing fire—the spirit, the soul, of connubial love and joy. What, indeed, could be left remaining of that which never had any real existence? And money! money! money! what shall I say of that vilest of degradations and abuses, by which the most sacred, inti-

mate, tender, and indissoluble of earth's relations. one which ought to be cemented and secured by the very finest and most delicate sensibilities and most inviolably honourable sentiments and feelings of the heart, is reduced to a base and sordid summing up of cash columns and bank interest, or a problem in land measuring and farm stock. "The love of money" (not money, observe, but the love of money) is said, by the highest authority, to be "the root of all evil"; and of the many evils that have sprung from this productive root, the one I am now noticing is assuredly none of the least. A money marriage is a marriage in form only; recognised indeed in human courts, but hardly owned as legitimate in the court of heaven. It is a mere mercantile bargain, a trading co-partnery, a union of purses (and hardly even that, for purses are kept with great jealousy where money is the object, and that object is to get a purse rather than to give one—the eager and covetous aspirant having often none to give), and not at all a union of affections. Now, if men and women will be thus unprincipled, as well as foolish, in forming the connection, is it wonderful that they should find but little happiness in it? Would not the greater wonder be that they found any at all?—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) With what hasty, light, foolish consideration do men and women jump at random into a connection that is to last for life, and of necessity most intimately and most unceasingly to affect the happiness of all their future days. How often is this done as if it were a mere holiday frolic, which could be broken off at will, as soon as they get tired of it! They hope they are to be happy. They have no doubt of it. But the reason of their having no doubt is their never having bestowed a single reflection on the grounds that exist for the hope. Had they done so, they might have found them much more scanty than those for fear. But it is a wedding, and that is enough. They have got married. The charm is in the word. As to congeniality of sentiment, and feeling, and desires, and habits, and pursuits, with all else that comes amongst the likelihoods of social harmony and happiness, such things have never entered into the calculation. Indeed there has been nothing of calculation or forethought in the matter. And is it to be wondered at, then, that they who thus wed in haste should repent at leisure?—*Ibid.*

(c) I do not believe any man was ever happier than when, having married early (and early marriages are usually virtuous marriages), and married for love, he and his companion went down into life together, and every day was a day of engineering to fit their means to their necessities, in their single slenderly furnished room, where they conferred together how to put scrap with scrap, and eke out pittance with pittance, and everything was calculated by pennies. How often, in later life, when people become rich, do the husband

and wife look at each other and say, "After all, my dear, we never shall be happier than when we first started out together." Thank God, a man does not need to be very rich to be very happy, only so that he has a treasure in himself. A loving heart, a genuine sympathy, a pure, unadulterated taste, a life that is not scorched by dissipation or wasted by untimely hours, a good sound body, and a clear conscience—these things ought to make a man happy.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) The use of such expressions (as, "near of kin," Heb. "flesh of his flesh," Lev. xviii. 6), undoubtedly contains an appeal to the *horror naturalis*, or that repugnance with which man instinctively shrinks from matrimonial union with one with whom he is connected by the closest ties both of blood and of family affection. On this subject we need say no more than that there is a difference in kind between the affection that binds the members of a family together, and that which lies at the bottom of the matrimonial bond, and that the amalgamation of these affections cannot take place without a serious shock to one or the other of the two; hence the desirability of drawing a distinct line between the provinces of each, by stating definitely where the matrimonial affection may legitimately take root.—*W. L. Bevan, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(e) In this great whirligig of the world, there is nothing stranger than the mating and mismating of men and women. There is no question that is more insoluble, and more often asked, than this, "What on earth ever tempted that woman to marry that man?" You cannot answer it, I cannot, and she cannot. There is but one other question like it, and that is, "What on earth tempted that man to marry such a woman?" He cannot tell, and she cannot, and nobody can. So it is, and so it will be, all the time, here and there, and everywhere. And, while there are some who, disappointed, rebound and break away into immoralities, or into an indifference which is an immorality in the realm of love, there are others of a greater soul, who give their whole life to fidelities in their relation. They know that they do not love. They know that there is that in them which is capable of development, but which they have never known. There are prophecies in themselves, which they do not want to awaken, of what their soul is capable of. If they read a book where the heroism of love is described, they shut the book, and tears flow from their eyes, and they say, "Oh! what might have been." But that is not safe, and they banish it, and go on in the usual way. Early and late they are faithful.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) I need not say that much of the happiness of human life depends upon the marriage unions which are formed. It is one thing to view the subject of marriage in the light of passion or convenience, and another to regard it as an institution by which human life may be developed and trained to the highest uses



and enjoyments. I do not hesitate to lay down the broad principle that where there is incongruity of religious conviction between man and woman, happiness of the deepest and purest kind is entirely out of the question. This principle is impartial in its application, having equal reference to the woman as to the man, and to the man as to the woman. Take the case of a young woman who has deep religious convictions and sympathies: she has been trained under religious influences, her habits have been identified with the sanctuary from very early life: she has taught in the school, she has served in connection with many agencies of the Church, and altogether her name has become honourably associated with benevolent operations; she is sought in marriage by a young man who has no religious convictions or sympathies, who, in fact, is worldly-minded, grovelling, earthly; he may, indeed, be a man of education, literary refinement, of good social position, of captivating address; nay, more—I will go further, and say, he may be a man against whom society is unable justly to point the finger of reproach. Wherever he is known he is respected for many social excellencies. Viewed in a worldly sense, the young man may be pronounced an eligible candidate for the lady's hand, yet, in the presence of such conditions, I have dis-

tinctly to give it as my opinion that happiness of the highest kind is impossible in such a connection. There must, on the woman's part, be more or less of sacrifice of the convictions and sympathies which have distinguished her whole life. Her religious emphasis will be modified; more or less of a chill will subdue her Christian zeal; her works of benevolence will be in some degree impaired; there may not be any great outward difference in her manner, but her soul must have felt the desolation of an impoverishing influence.

We know the ordinary excuse that is made when the Christian marries one who has no devotional sympathies: the generous, hopeful, self-sacrificing woman openly avows her belief that in a very little time she will be able to bring her intended husband to a right decision; she knows (poor creature!) that there is something good in him; she has heard (O mocking ear!) him say words which she construed into a noble intention on his part; she is sure all will be right by and by; a little patience, a little humouring, and a little instruction—then all will be right! This is the dream of her love, the inspiration of her ill-directed hope. Don't account me cruel when I denounce it as an imposition—a deceit—a lie.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

### MAN'S NEED OF MORAL DIRECTIONS, AND GOD'S COMMUNICATIONS TO MAN.

#### (Verse 13.)

This verse refers to all the laws which were given in the plains of Moab (chap. xxv.—xxxvi.), and concludes the record of that legislation in the same way as the record of the legislation at Sinai was concluded (Lev. xxvi. 46; xxvii. 34). The text suggests—

#### I. Man's need of moral direction.

It is here implied that man requires "commandments and judgments" from the Lord. He needs moral guidance.

1 *Conscience is not a reliable guide.* Conscience has been deteriorated by sin. It sometimes slumbers, as in the case of David after his great crimes (2 Sam. xii. 1-6). It sometimes leads astray, as in the case of Saul the persecutor (Acts xxvi. 9). "It is a safe guide only when it is directed by the commandment of the Lord." (a)

2. *The light of nature is not an adequate and reliable guide.* It seems to us that many persons ascribe to the

light of nature what unassisted human reason would never have discovered, had it not been previously revealed in the Scriptures. (b)

But taking "natural religion to signify that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties, without higher assistance," we pronounce it an inadequate moral and spiritual guide for man. There are great obligations which the light of nature does not reveal; e.g., that of worship to God, and that of universal benevolence to man. Human nature has deep cravings to which natural religion offers no response. We cry out for forgiveness of sin; but natural religion can afford no satisfaction to our anxious hearts. Over the graves of our beloved dead we ask earnestly and importunately, "If a man die shall he live again?" but nature is silent as those graves. The



state of religious knowledge amongst even the most distinguished minds, who had not been blessed with a spiritual and Divine revelation, affords conclusive evidence of the inadequacy of natural religion for man's moral and spiritual guidance. (c)

II. Man's need of special direction when entering upon new enterprises and experiences.

The commandments and judgments referred to in the text were given to "the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho." They were about to set forward to take possession of the Promised Land; and these commandments and judgments were for their guidance and control in the novel scenes and engagements to which they were advancing. And as we go forward into untrodden ways and new undertakings, we need directions from Heaven. We may obtain such directions by studying the revealed will of God; by seeking for them at the throne of grace; and by carefully

observing the indications of Divine providence. (d)

III. God's communications to man.

The Lord met Israel's need of guidance and control by His gracious communications.

Notice—

1. *Their nature.* "Commandments and judgments." This implies His supreme authority. He has a right to command men. This right rests upon,—(1) His relations to man. He is our creator, &c. (c) (2) His personal character. He is infinitely righteous and wise and kind. He is supreme in authority because He is supreme in excellence.

2. *Their method.* "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses." He makes known His will to man through man. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since God has graciously revealed His will for our guidance, it is both our obligation and advantage to follow it fully and at all times.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) *Conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible.* What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the Fall, and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old desolate ruin, thrown from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and covered by tall rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blasphemy; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God! and as if fiends had taken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes, as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the "Book of Martyrs," read the sufferings of our own forefathers, and under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake.

With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest; and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one only sure and safe directory.—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(b) When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see we see with our own eyes,

we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others who showed it to us, and first made us see it, as if we were not at all beholden to them for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into. For knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favourable enough to our own faculties to conclude that they, of their own strength, would have attained those discoveries without any foreign assistance; and that we know those truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom we received them by theirs; only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one as his private possession as soon as he, profiting by other's discoveries, has got it into his own mind; and so it is; but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered; but their pains were of another sort who first brought those truths to light which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far in such a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour, little considering how much he owes to their pains who cleared the wood, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable, without which he might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles, and are now grown familiar and, as it were, natural to us, under the Gospel, we take for unquestionable, obvious truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them had Revelation been silent. And many others are beholden to Revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to Revelation that reason gives its suffrage, too, to the truths Revelation has discovered; but it is our mistake to think that, because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.—*John Locke*.

(c) They who speak of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of morals and religion, owe all their best views to that fountain of inspiration from which they so criminally turn aside. For how otherwise is it, that those fundamental principles in morals and religion which modern philosophers have exhibited as

demonstrable by the unassisted powers of the human mind, were either held doubtfully, or connected with some manifest absurdity, or utterly denied, by the wisest moral teachers among the Gentiles, who lived before the Christian revelation was given? They had the same works of God to behold, and the same course of providence to reason from; to neither of which were they inattentive. They had intellectual endowments, which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages; and their reason was rendered acute and discriminative by the discipline of mathematical and dialectic science. They had everything which the moderns have, except the Bible; and yet on points which have been generally settled, among the moral philosophers of our own age, as fundamental to natural religion, they have no just views, and no settled conviction. "The various apprehensions of wise men," says Cicero, "will justify the doubtings and demurs of sceptics; and it will then be sufficient to blame them when others agree, or any one has found out the truth. We say not, that nothing is true; but that some false things are annexed to all that is true, and that with so much likeness, that there is no certain note of judging what is true, or assenting to it. We deny not that something may be true; but we deny that it can be perceived so to be; for what have we certain concerning good and evil? Nor for this are we to be blamed, but nature, which has hidden the truth in the deep."

On this subject Dr. Samuel Clark, though so great an advocate of natural religion, concedes that, "of the philosophers, some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of a God; some by ascribing all things to chance, others to absolute fatality, equally subverted all true notions of religion, and made the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, needless and impossible. Some professed open immorality; others, by subtle distinction, patronised particular vices. The better sort of them, who were most celebrated, discoursed with the greatest reason, yet with much uncertainty and doubtfulness, concerning things of the highest importance,—the providence of God in governing the world; the immortality of the soul; and a future judgment."—*Richard Watson*.

(d) For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 152-154, 164.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 88, 89.

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## **ERRATA.**

**Page 36a, line 50, for "xxvii." read "xxxvii."**

- " 39a, " 2, " "form" " "from."
- " 84a, " 53, " "Plumtre" read "Plumptre."
- " 100b, " 17, " "God" " "Christ."
- " 115b, " 45, " "taonement" read "atonement."
- " 191a, " 43, " "negotūs" " "negotiiis."
- " 224a, " 44, supply "the" before "good."
- " 415a, " 50, for "2 Cor. ix." read "2 Cor. x."
- " 448a, " 26, " "word" " "way."
- " 466, " 24, " "blessings" " "blessing."
- " 494b, " 27, " "Huntingdon" read "Huntington."
- " 583a, " 18, " "them" " "him."

# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

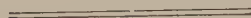
ON THE BOOK OF

## DEUTERONOMY.

*WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDICES, Etc., Etc*

BY

REV. JAMES WOLFENDALE.



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# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

## DEUTERONOMY.

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON THE BOOK.

**I. The Name.** The Books of the Pentateuch are called by their first word, *e.g.*, Genesis בְּרֵשִׁית B'rēshīth = "In beginning:" Exodus וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת V'el'leh Sh'mōth = "And these the names." So Deuteronomy has been called אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים Ēl'leh Hādd'bbārim = "These the words." The Rabbins, however, sometimes named the Book סֵפֶר תּוֹכַחֲוֹת Sēphēr Thōchākḥōth = "Book of Rebukes." But by the Jewish people it was frequently called מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה Mīshnēh Hāttōrāh = recapitulation or repetition of the law, from Deut. xvii. 18, which name was adopted by the LXX. who christened the Book Δευτερονόμιον, and the Vulgate, following, Deuteronomium; English, Deuteronomy.

**II. Author.** "One of the first questions connected with the Pentateuch" (and of course Deuteronomy) "is that of authorship" (*Davidson*). "Moses was the originally received author of the Book of Deuteronomy. In early times no one, Jew, Christian, or heathen, denied the Mosaic authorship till Aben Ezra, in the twelfth century, raised some doubts" (*Patrick*). "In the seventeenth century Richard Simon, in his 'Critical History of the Old Testament,' denied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch" (*Kitto's Dict.*, s. v. *Simon*). "Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the authorship of the Pentateuch has given rise to much discussion" (*Horne's Introduction*). But the whole controversy may be summarised under two heads: (a.) The Supplementary (*Horne*) or Fragmentary Hypothesis (*Hävernick*); and (b.) The Mosaic authorship. In our limited space we refrain from adding one word to the controversy, but would rather refer the reader to two or three works where the question is stated and literature on the subject is given, *e.g.*, Articles "Pentateuch," "Deuteronomy," in *Kitto's Cyc. Bib. Lit.* and *Smith's Dictionary*; *Horne's Introduction*, vol. ii. 593; *Davidson's Introduction to Old Testament*, vol. i.; *Keil and Delitzsch on Pentateuch*, vol. i. 17-28; *Hengstenberg's Egypt and Books of Moses*; *Hävernick's Introduction to Old Testament*; *Colenso's Pentateuch*; *Speaker's Commentary*. We would, however, quote a word from two writers on this matter before leaving it: "If the Pentateuch is not the work of him who names himself in it as its author, it is the work of deception. The history is then an untrue history: the laws are falsely ascribed to Moses: the predictions have been invented *post eventum*" (*Hävernick*). "The genius and dispo-

sition, in other words, *the character of the author; the contents of the Books themselves, or what they treat of in relation to historical, political, and geographical topics; the nature of the style and language, and the arrangement and form of these Books, all show Moses to be the author*" (*Jahn*).

**III. Contents.** The Book is divided into two parts: the first, from chap. i. to xxx.; the second, from chap. xxxi. to xxxiv.

I. Consists of three addresses which Moses delivered to all the people according to the head of chap. i. vers. 1-4.

(a.) i. 6-iv. 40. First address, to prepare the way for exposition and enforcement of the law.

(b.) v.-xxvi. Second address, is the law itself, which Moses set before the people, and consists of two parts—

(1.) v.-xi. General.

(2.) xii.-xxvi. Special.

(c.) xxvii.-xxx. Third address, has reference to the renewal of the covenant.

II. The second part of the Book contains the close of Moses' life and labours.

(a.) Appointment of Joshua to be the leader of Israel into Canaan (xxxii.)

(b.) Song of Moses (xxxii. 1-47).

(c.) Announcement of Moses' death (xxxii. 40-52).

(d.) Blessing of Moses (xxxiii.)

(e.) Account of Moses' death (xxxiv.)

*Vide* Keil and Delitzsch, Angus' Handbook to Bible, Davidson's Introduction, Smith's Dictionary, Speaker's Commentary, and Kitto's Cyc. Bib. Lit.

**IV. Date.** If the Mosaic authorship be accepted, then the date of the Book is easily fixed, and may be determined by chap. i. 3, which implies that the Book was composed during the last two months of the life of Moses. (*Cf.* Keil and Delitzsch, Horne, Hävernick, Speaker's Commentary.) On the other hand, if the Mosaic authorship be rejected, then the date is fixed variously by different critics, *e.g.*, De Wette, time of Solomon; Ewald, of Manasseh; and so on, and so on, *quot homines tot sententiæ*. But see the authorities already named, with the addition of Jahn, from whom a word: "The language of the Pentateuch is very ancient Hebrew, and differs considerably from the Psalms and other more modern books. There are no foreign words to be found in the Pentateuch, except some of old Egyptian origin. Archaisms occur, and forms less frequent in the modern books."

**V. Purpose of the Book.** Exodus depicts the inauguration of the kingdom of God on Sinai. Leviticus and Numbers, the former narrates the *spiritual*, the latter the *political* organisation of the kingdom, by facts and legal precepts. Deuteronomy recapitulates the whole in a hortatory strain, embracing both history and legislation, and impresses it upon the hearts of the people, for the purpose of arousing true fidelity to the covenant, and securing its lasting duration. The economy of the old covenant having been thus established, the revelation of the law closes with the death of its Mediator (*Keil and Delitzsch*).

**VI. Relation of Deuteronomy to the other Books of the Pentateuch.** It is not quite accurate to speak of Deuteronomy as *merely* a recapitulation of things commanded and done in the preceding books, nor yet as a compendium and summary of the law. Large portions of the Mosaic code are omitted. Still less is it a manual for the ignorant. . . . Deuteronomy is an authoritative and inspired commentary on the law, serving in some respects also as a supplement and codicil to it. The preceding books displayed Moses principally in the capacity of the legislator or annalist. Deuteronomy sets him before us in the light of the prophet (*cf.* Speaker's Commentary, Keil and Delitzsch).

**VII. Genuineness.** "A very strong proof of the genuineness of the Book lies in its relation to the later writings of the prophets. Of all the books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy has been made most use of by the prophets, simply because it is best calculated to serve as a model for prophetic declarations, as also because of the inward harmony that exists between the prophecies and the law upon which they are built" (*Hävernick*).

**VIII. Style.** "The speeches exhibit a unity of style and character which is strikingly consistent with such circumstances. They are pervaded by the same vein of thought, the same tone and tenor of feeling, the same peculiarities of conception and expression. They exhibit matter which is neither documentary nor traditional, but conveyed in the speaker's own words. Their aim is strictly hortatory; their style earnest, heart-stirring, impressive, in passages sublime, but throughout rhetorical" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "The style throughout is changed" (from that of the other books of the Pentateuch). "The manner of representation is somewhat rhetorical, verbose, and not unlike the prophetic. The tone is no longer that of the narrator or a lawgiver, but that of a moral preacher who expatiates in long exhortations. Moreover, the style has some peculiar turns, which appear not in the other books, but in the prophets, especially Jeremiah" (*Schumann*). "In Deuteronomy the speaker is evidently an old man, whose age has rendered him somewhat verbose, captious, and querulous, and disposed to censure the errors of his juniors" (*Jahn*).

**IX. Deuteronomy in the Synagogue.** The Jews divided the Pentateuch into fifty-four parts. The division into fifty-four sections was to provide a lesson for each Sabbath, from the Pentateuch, of those years which, according to Jewish chronology, have fifty-four Sabbaths. In those years which have only fifty-two Sabbaths, four shorter sections are read on two Sabbaths. The first section, Genesis i.-vi. 8, is read on the first Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy embraces sections 44 to 54. For a full account see Dr. Ginsburg's article "Haphtara," in Kitto's "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature."

**X. Estimates of Deuteronomy.** "The Book is superior to all the other books of the Pentateuch, for it is the summing up. . . . Its contents are a Divine revelation in words and deed, or, rather, the fundamental revelation through which Jehovah selected Israel to be His people, and gave to them their rule of life (*nomos*) or theocratical constitution as a people and kingdom" (*Keil and Delitzsch*). "Moses delivered this address to Israel a short time before his death. . . . The address of Moses is in perfect harmony with his situation. He speaks like a dying father to his children. The words are earnest, inspired, impressive. He looks back over the whole forty years of their wanderings, reminds of blessings received, ingratitude returned, God's judgments and His love, explains laws, adds what is necessary, &c." (*Hengstenberg*). "The Book of Deuteronomy contains, not so much a recapitulation of the things commanded and done, as related in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as a compendium and summary of the whole law and wisdom of the people of Israel, wherein those things which related to the priests are omitted, and only such things included as the people generally required to know" (*Luther*). "With respect to the prophetic parts of Deuteronomy, it should be remarked that Messiah is here more explicitly foretold than in the preceding books, and described as the completion of the Jewish economy. The prophecies of Moses increase in number and clearness toward the end of his writings. As he approached the end of his life he appears to have discerned futurity with more exactness" (*Clapham*).



## CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.—I. Biographical. *Sihon*. סִיחֹן (Sikhōn). LXX. Σηών.

*Joseph*. Σαχών. King of the Amorites when the Israelites reached the borders of Canaan,—a man of courage and audacity. Shortly before the appearance of Israel, he had dispossessed Moab of a splendid territory. He did not temporise, like Balak, but fought at once. . . . *Og*. אֹג. The Amoritish king of Bashan, who ruled sixty cities (cf. Josh. xiii. 12). One of the last of the Rephaim. According to tradition, he escaped from the flood by wading beside the Ark (*Salé's Koran*, Note, chap. v.) He was supposed to be the largest of the sons of Anak, and descended from Ad: said to have lived 3000 years, and refused the warning of Jethro, sent to him and his people as a prophet. . . . *Caleb*. כָּלֵב (Cālēbh). LXX. Σάλεβ. Son of Jephunneh, a Kenezite (cf. Numb. xxxii. 12; Josh. xiv. 6, 14). He was a ruler or prince, and a head in the tribe of Judah. Apparently he was brave, conscientious, outspoken. . . . *Jephunneh*. יִפְחֻנְנֵה. LXX. Ἰεφοννή. Father of Caleb, probably of an Edomite tribe, called Kenezites, from Kenaz, their founder, who was a son of Eliphaz, the son of Esau (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 15, 42; 1 Chron. i. 53; Josh. xiv. 14. . . . *Joshua*. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ Y'hoshua. LXX. Ἰησοῦς = whose help is in Jehovah (*Gesenius*): God the Saviour (*Pearson*). Son of Nun, tribe of Ephraim (1 Chron. vii. 27). Born about the time Moses fled to Midian. The future captain was at first a slave. Mentioned first in the fight against Amalek at Rephidim, where he led Israel. When Moses ascended Sinai, Joshua accompanied him. He was one of the twelve chiefs sent to spy out the land. He evidently was one of the natural leaders of Israel, and therefore a man of character, force, and energy. . . . Nun. נֹחַ. Nun. In Syriac and Arabic = a fish. LXX. Ναυή. Nothing is known of him.

II. Historical Allusions and Contemporary History. "*Amorite*." אֲמֹרִי Emōrī. The dwellers on the summits—mountaineers; one of the chief nations who possessed the land of Canaan before its conquest by the Israelites. As "Highlanders" they contrast with the "Canaanites," who were "Lowlanders." As children of the hills they were a bold, hardy race. From the days of Abram to the time of Joshua this people fully maintained their character of the "warrior." After the conquest of Canaan, nothing is heard of them in the Bible, except in the usual formula where the early inhabitants are occasionally referred to. . . . *Anākim*. עַנְקִים "Anākim. A race of giants, so called either from their stature or strength. They were

descendants of Arba, and dwelt in the southern part of Canaan. The race appears to have been divided into three families. Their chief city was Hebron. . . . Of contemporary history it is impossible to speak definitely,—it is one vast chaos, where the mind is lost in the wild confusion of conflicting theories. In our limited space we dare not venture on more than, Egypt was; Assyria was possibly throwing out the rootlets of the future tree of her empire; Greece was the habitation of scattered tribes; Phœnicia probably was sending forth her fleets to plough the ocean; but so uncertain are the records, silence is esteemed better than what might be shown a baseless theory.

III. Natural History. Ver. 1. *Red Sea*. Heb. Suph, lit. "reeds," seaweed, sedge, river-grass, rushes; specially of the thick and strong rushes on the banks of the Nile, and of the sedges of the Red Sea, from which this latter receives its name of Yam Suph. The word in this verse gives name to some place in the district of the wanderings. Ver. 25. "*Fruit of the land*." "The Hebrews had three generic terms, designating three great classes of the fruits of the land, closely corresponding to what may be expressed in English as (1.) Corn-fruit or field produce; (2.) Vintage fruit; (3.) Orchard fruit. The principal fruits are grapes, olives, figs; those less common are pomegranate, apricot, walnut, almond, apple, quince, mulberry, date, orange, lemon, citron, banana, and prickly pear. Ver. 44. "As bees do." Of bees in general we say nothing, for there are so many handbooks on these busy little creatures. For the force of the reference, see quotation from "Park's Travels."

IV. Manners and Customs. The tone of the chapter, apart from such direct references as the dwelling in tents, and moving from place to place, indicates a primitive people. Moses is the father to them: they each bring their little troubles to him—"he carries" as a father his child—his words are authoritative. Ver. 11. A complimentary wish. In early stages of society, when life is simple, large families are a blessing. It is only in highly organised and artificial forms of life that families become an extravagance. Ver. 13. The people lived in families and tribes. Kinship, rather than geographical bounds, made divisions for the nation. The tribal relations were long kept up. Ver. 28. "*Walled cities*." Warfare was of a personal kind, the chief weapons being those by which a man could inflict injury on a man. With the exception of the battering ram, the ancients had few means of assaulting fortifications. A wall, though useless now, was of the utmost importance then. For the same reason, the "great" and "tall" men were a terror to their foes. A giant was a "somebody" in those days. Ver. 39. "Little ones . . . a prey." The conquerors took captive the living. The men who survived were generally put to death, sometimes the women too; but the latter, for

the most part, with the children, were made into slaves. This fact exemplifies the statement in note on ver. 11; children were valuable. Ver. 27. "Murmured in your tents." As a roving and pastoral people they had no fixed habitation. Houses were unknown. Their temple was only a fabric of skins and linen cloth and rope—a Tabernacle.

V. Chronology. The chronology of this Book, like that in all the post-Exodus, dates from the escape from Egypt, when the people entered on their real life of freedom (cf. Exod. xii. 1, 2); the date in ver. 3 is, therefore, the eleventh month of the fortieth year from their leaving Egypt.

VI. Literary Criticism. "On this side Jordan," render, *beyond* Jordan. The Hebrew word = "this side," "other side" (cf. Gesenius). "The phrase *b'heber hay-yarden*, means literally, 'at the side or passage of Jordan'" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "In the plain" בערבה Bā-ā-rā-bah. Gesenius connects the word with one which means "burnt up," "waste," therefore "sterile" = desert. But besides this general meaning there is a special significance, according to Gesenius, which the writer in "Smith's Dictionary" accepts, when the word is used with the article as in the present instance: the word then is a proper name, and was applied to the country between the Dead Sea and the Elenitic Gulph (cf. Geographical Notes). "Red Sea," render, "over against Suph" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "Flags" (Benisch). "It is impossible that our translators can here be correct in rendering *Suph*, the Red Sea: (a) because that is invariably called 'Yam Suph' = sea of Suph; and (b) because Moses and the people were at this time on the eastern side of Jordan (ver. 5), and, consequently, far enough from the Red Sea" (*Carpenter*). "Dizahab." די זהב Di Zahab. The word should be separated as it is in Hebrew. As *zahab* means gold, the LXX. rendered it *καρὰ χρύσεα*, and the Vulgate *ubi auri est plurimum*. It is probably the name of a place. Ver. 2. For position of the verse cf. *infra*. Ver. 5. Moses speaks in the third person of himself. This need be no difficulty. It was frequently done by ancient writers, both religious and profane: cf. John's "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and Cæsar's *Commentary*, the writer always speaks of himself in the third person. . . . "Began," better, "undertook." Ver. 6. "Dwelt long enough," "sitten much" (*Ainworth*). Ver. 7. "Nigh thereunto," Hebrew, "his neighbours." Ver. 8. "Set," Hebrew, "given" (Benisch). Ver. 13. "Take," Hebrew, "give," "put," (Benisch). Ver. 15. "Made," Hebrew, "gave" (*Speaker's Commentary*). Ver. 17. "Respect persons," Hebrew, "acknowledge faces," "recognise a face" (Benisch, cf. Gesenius). Ver. 22. "Search," Hebrew, "dig." They were to uncover what was concealed. Ver. 23. "The thing pleased me well," Hebrew, "was good in my eyes." Ver. 25. "Brought," "restored" (Benisch). Ver. 26. "Commandment," Hebrew, "mouth." According to a common figure of speech in Hebrew, the instrument is used for the thing accomplished by that instrument. Ver. 28. "Discouraged," Hebrew, "melt." Ver. 27. "Murmured," Hebrew, "vituperated" (Benisch). Ver. 41. "Weapons of war," or *armour*. . . . "Ye were ready to go up." Rather, perhaps, "ye made light of going up;" i.e., "ye were ready to attempt it as a trifling undertaking." For further comments on this much-discussed verse, *vide Speaker's Commentary*. Ver. 44. "In Seir," "from" Seir (*Clapham*). "As bees do," the same comparison in *Iliad* xvi. 259, &c.

VII. Geographical. Jordan. יַרְדֵּן Yārdēn = to descend. LXX. *Ιορδάνης*. Vul. *Jordanis*, called now by the Arabs *Esh-Sheriah* = the watering-place. Has two sources: one rises at the western base of a hill where Dan once stood, and gushes forth a great fountain, the largest in Syria, and, mingling with the waters of another fountain which springs up under an immense oak close by, forms the Leddan (ancient Dan). Four miles east, on a terrace of Hermon, at the foot of a limestone cliff, is the second source, which bursts forth from a yawning abyss in a gloomy cavern. Uniting, these two streams form the Jordan, which flows very rapidly through a deep valley all its length till it is lost in the Dead Sea. Length about 200 miles. . . . *The Arabah* (cf. "Critical Notes," "Literary Criticism"). "This is a name given to the deep, low lying plain on both sides of the Jordan, which runs from the Lake of Gennesaret to the Dead Sea, and stretches southward from the Dead Sea to Aila, at the northern extremity of the Red Sea, as we may very clearly see from Deut. ii. 8, where the way which the Israelites took past Edom to Aila is called the way of the Arabah, and also from the fact that the Dead Sea is called the sea of the Arabah (Deut. iii. 17, iv. 49). At present the name Arabah is simply attached to the southern half of this valley, between the Dead Sea and Red Sea; whilst the northern part, between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee, is called El Ghor, though several Arabic geographers extend the name Ghor from the Sea of Galilee to Aila" (*Keil and Delitzsch*). . . . Red Sea. סוּף Suph. (cf. "Critical Notes," "Literary Criticism"). Keil and Delitzsch make Suph to be the Red Sea. "Some reedy place out of Palestine" (*Fürst*). "Suph, probably a district on the frontier of Moab. Ptolemy mentions a people called Sophonites, who dwelt in Arabia Petrea, and who have been thought to take their name from this place" (*Carpenter*). . . . Paran. פָּאֵרָן Pā-rān = white. LXX. and Josh. *Φαράν*; (a.) A desert = et-Tih; (b.) A mountain near Seir (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Hab. iii. 3); (c.) Probably a town (*Smith's Dictionary*). "Paran may either be *mount* Paran of Deut. xxxiii. 2, or a city mentioned by Eusebius, Jerome, and several modern geographers near the *mount*" (*Speaker's Commentary*). . . . Tophel. תּוֹפֵל Tophel = plaster, mortar. Probably identical with Tufleh



(Robinson); and "a locality so called from the chalk-beds there" (*Fürst*). "It is still a considerable place, some little distance south-east of the Dead Sea" (*Speaker's Commentary*). "Numerous springs and rivulets (ninety-nine according to the Arabs), the waters of which unite below, render the town very agreeable. It is surrounded by a large plantation of fruit-trees — apples, apricots, figs, pomegranates, &c." (*Buckhardt*). . . . *Laban*. לָבָן *Lābān*. Identical with Libnah, this latter being the feminine form of the word; but whether the place mentioned here can be identified with that mentioned Num. xxxiii. 20, remains to be seen. . . . *Hazereth*. חֲצֵרֹת *Khätzrōth* = "enclosures," "hamlets." In Numbers xi. 35, xii. 16, xxxiii. 17, the LXX. renders it Ἀσπρώθ, but here Ἀδλῶν. Though identified with a station of the Israelites (Num. xi. 35), yet on insufficient evidence. Nothing is known for certain of the place. . . . *Dizahab* (*cf.* "Literary Notes"). . . . "Horeb." חֹרֵב *Khōrēb*.

LXX. Σωφῆβ. "A top of Sinai, on which the Mosaic law was announced, now G'ibl Mōsa. Formerly Horeb was the general name, and Sinai the more restricted" (*Fürst*). On the question of the peculiar and contradictory use of "Horeb" in Deuteronomy, see Note in Kito's Family Bible, and the articles "Horeb," "Sinai," in the various Dictionaries. "The fixed use of the name Horeb, to designate the mountain group in general, instead of the special name Sinai, which is given to the particular peak whereon the law was given, is in keeping with the rhetorical style of the Book" (*Keil and Delitzsch, cf. &c.*)

*Kadesh Barnea*. קָדֵשׁ בָּרְנֵעַ *Kādesh Bārneā*. Κάδης Βαρῆ. Sometimes written *Kadesh*. It is probable that the term "Kadesh," though applied to a city, had also a wider application, and referred to a region, in which *Kadesh-Meribah* certainly, and *Kadesh Barnea* probably, indicates a precise spot. . . . The nearest approximation, then, which can be given to a site for the city of *Kadesh*, may be probably attained by drawing a circle from the pass *Es-Sūfa*, at the radius of about a day's journey; its south-western quadrant will intersect the "wilderness of Paran" or *Et-Tih*, which is there overhung by the superimposed plateau of the mountain of the Amorites; while its south-eastern one will cross what has been designated the "wilderness of Zin." This seems to satisfy all the conditions of the passages of *Genesis*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy* which refer to it. The nearest site in harmony with this view which has yet been suggested is undoubtedly the "Ain-el-Weibel" (*cf. Smith's Dictionary*). . . . *Seir*. שַׁעִיר = "rough" or "rugged." Σηελ. There is a "land" of and "mount" *Seir* (*cf. Gen. xxii. 3, xxxvi. 30, xiv. 6; and Deut. i. 2*). Apparently they are the same. The original name of the mountain ridge extended along the east side of the valley of the Arabah from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulph. The name was derived either from *Seir*, the Horite (*Gen. xxxvi. 20*), or, more probably, from the rough aspect of the whole country. The sharp and serrated ridges, the jagged rocks and cliffs, the straggling bushes and stunted trees, give the whole scene a sternness and ruggedness almost unparalleled. Mount *Seir* was originally inhabited by the Horites, who were doubtless the excavators of those singular rock dwellings with which the district abounds. They were dispossessed by the posterity of *Esau* (*Deut. ii. 12*). The mount was the subject of a terrible prophetic curse (*Ezek. xxxv*). . . . *Heshbon*. הֶשְׁבֹּן

*Khēshbōn* = stronghold. LXX. Ἑσέβων. The capital city of *Sihon*, king of the Amorites (*Num. xxi. 26*). It stands on the boundary line between *Reuben* and *Gad*. The ruins of *Heshbon*, twenty miles east of *Jordan*, mark the site of the ancient city. Chiefly celebrated from its connection with *Sihon*. After the captivity it fell into the hands of the *Moabites*. In the fourth century it was a place of note, but now desolate. The ruins of *Heshbon* stand on a low hill rising out of the great plateau, and are more than a mile in circuit, but not a building is entire. One remarkable structure remains with the workmanship of the different ages visible—the massive stones of the Jewish period, the sculptured cornice of the Roman, the light arch of the Saracenic. Many cisterns and a large reservoir remain. . . . *Bashan*.

הַבַּשָּׁן *Hāb-Bashān*, almost invariably written with the article before it = the basalt land. A district on the east of *Jordan*. It extended from the borders of *Gilead* on the south to *Mount Hermon* on the north; and from the Arabah or *Jordan valley* on the west to *Salchah* on the east. At the conquest it was bestowed on the half tribe of *Manasseh*, and was proverbial for its oaks and bulls. *Astaroth*. אֲשֶׁתֵּרֹת *Ashtārōth*. LXX. Ἀσπρώθ. A city on the east of *Jordan* in *Bashan*, in the kingdom of *Og*, doubtless so called from being a seat of the worship of the goddess of the same name. For the fortunes of *A.*, *cf. Josh. xiii. 31; 1 Chron. vi. 71*. It subsequently passes from history. *Jerome* tells us it was about six miles from *Ada*, which was twenty-five from *Bostra*. The only trace of the name that modern research has discovered is *Tell Ashterah* (*Ritter, Porter, &c.*) *Edrei*. אֶדְרַי *Edrāi*. Ἐδραῖ. There are two towns of this name: one in the north of *Palestine*, the other to the east of *Jordan*. It is with the latter that we have to deal. In Scripture it is only mentioned in connection with the victory of *Israel* over the Amorites under *Og*. It was one of the two capitals of *Bashan* (*Num. xxi. 33; Deut. i. 4; Josh. xii. 4*), and continued to be a large and important city till the seventh century A.D., though no further reference to it is made in Scripture. The ruins of an ancient city, still



bearing the name of Edr'a, stand on a rocky promontory, which projects from the south-west corner of the Lejah. The site a strange one—without water, without access, except most difficult, seems to have been chosen for its strength and security. The identity of this site with the Edrei of Scripture has been challenged, but see "Smith's Dictionary" for full particulars.

. . . . *Lebanon*. לבָּנוֹן *L'bānōn*. Ἀβανος. A mountain range in the north of Palestine. The name Lebanon means "white," and was applied on account of the snow which covers it for the greater part of the year, or on account of the white colour of its limestone rocks, cliffs, and peaks. There are two ranges parallel, named Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, or Lebanon toward the sun-rising, i.e., Eastern L. It was from the western range Solomon obtained his timber. The snow remains in patches the whole year on the summits of Lebanon. There is a very good article on "Lebanon" in "Smith's Dictionary," so too in Kitto. . . . *Euphrates*. פָּרָת

Prath. Εὐφράτης. Probably a word of Arian origin; and if so, means "the good and abounding river." The Euphrates is the largest, longest, and most important river in Western Asia. Its two chief sources are in the Armenian mountains. These two streams flow on, one 270, the other 400 miles, till they meet at Kebban-Maden, where a river is formed 120 yards wide, very deep and rapid. This flows nearly south in a tortuous course, forcing a way through the ranges of Taurus and Anti-Taurus, as if it would break into the Mediterranean, but, opposed by the ranges of Amanus and Lebanon, it turns south-east, and in this direction proceeds 1000 miles into the Persian Gulph. The length is 1780 miles, of which 1200 are navigable for boats and small steamers. The greatest width of the river is at a distance of 700 or 800 miles from its mouth, while much lower down it is nearly 300 yards narrower, and not so deep by six feet. The causes of this singular phenomenon are the entire absence of tributaries below the Khabour, and the employment of water in irrigation. . . . *Eshcol*. אֶשְׁכּוֹל *Eshcol*. Ἐσχολά. A wady

in the neighbourhood of Hebron, explored by the spies sent by Moses from Kadesh Barnea. From this fruitful valley was brought a large cluster of grapes, which, from the meaning of the word in Hebrew, explained to the spies the name of the place (Num. xiii. 23, 24). But it may be instructive to remember that, when Abraham dwelt in this locality, the names of the three chiefs of the Amorites, his neighbours, were Aner, *Eshcol*, and Mamre; and possibly the name of one may have attached itself to one of the fertile valleys near their home, when the name would be Amoritic, not Hebrew. . . . *Hormah*. חֶרְמָה *Khormāh* was the chief town of a Canaanitish tribe on the south of Palestine, reduced by Joshua. Its ancient name was Zephath (Judges i. 17). It became subsequently a city of Judah, though apparently belonging to Simeon, whose territory is reckoned part of the former.

## SAURIN'S DISSERTATION ON DEUTERONOMY, CHAP. I.

Moses, being about to die, recapitulates the laws of God in the presence of all Israel. When Moses was about to die, he made a last effort to stamp on the mind of Israel the law he had already given. The speeches made on that occasion form the Book of Deuteronomy—the second law. These discourses were not given all at once, on one day, but on several occasions.

I. He briefly relates to the people the most memorable events that befell them from the time they left Mount Horēh

(1.) The order they received to make the windings toward the mountains of the Amorites, &c. &c.

(2.) The sending of the spies; their report; the murmurings and punishment of the people; the dreadful oath of God that none should enter the Promised Land.

(3.) The divers tours made by them.

(4.) The victories gained over Sihon

and Og; the distribution of the country of the heathen.

(5.) The prayer of Moses for the revocation of God's sentence on himself.

(6.) The plagues and miracles.

II. Moses recapitulated *all* the laws—moral, ceremonial, political, and military.

III. Moses above all presses most home to the people the law which the Israelites stood in the greatest need of, i.e., that which was calculated to restrain their boundless inclination towards idolatry, and which caused them so often to relapse into it (*cf.* Deut. iv. 15, xiii. 6, &c., xvii. 2, &c.).

IV. Moses established the necessity of knowing the law of God, and of making it the object of perpetual meditation. All must read it: the young has no excuse in his weakness, nor the old in his infirmities (*cf.* vi. 6, 7, &c.).

V. Moses set before the eyes of the Israelites the great reasons which ought

to induce them to make the laws of God the rule of their behaviour.

(1.) All these laws terminated in the love of God as their centre (x. 12, 13).

(2.) These laws are of themselves sufficient to accumulate glory and happiness both on nations and private persons if they observe them religiously (*cf.* iv. 5, 6).

(3.) These laws were made by a Being which had dealt out His wonders and profuseness to a people for whom He had made them (iv. 32).

(4.) These laws draw down numberless blessings upon those who follow them, and as many misfortunes on those that break them (xi. 26).

(5.) These laws are endued with intrinsic justice (iv. 8).

(6.) These laws are adapted to the faculties and understandings of those for whom they were made (xxx. 11).

VI. Moses sharply reproaches the children of Israel for their ingratitude. This is why the Targum calls the book the Book of Reproaches (*cf.* xxxii. 5, 6, xv. 18, xxix. 30).

VII. Moses foretells the catastrophe into which the people should fall through their rebellions (*cf.* xxviii. 62, &c., xxxi. 1, &c.).

After that Moses had taken all the care his wisdom and prudence could suggest to engage the Israelites to be faithful to God, he concludes in lamenting the little success all these remonstrances were likely to produce.—*Epitome of Saurin's lxxiii. Dissertation.*

Ver. 1. "On this side," or, on the outside, *i.e.*, beyond Jordan. as the Greek translateth. This word (בְּעֵבֶר *b'ēbēr*) signifieth both sides, and by circumstance of place is to be understood. To those out of Canaan, it was on this side; to the Israelites in Canaan, it was beyond, or the outside of Jordan, where Moses spake these things.—*Ainsworth.*

"On this side." To those on the east, it was this; to those on the west of Jordan, the other side.

"The plain:" to wit, of Moab's land, as ver. 5; see Num. xxii. 1. There Moses spake these things and died (Deut. xxxiv. 5). Chald. saith Moses rebuked

them, "because they had provoked God in the plain."—*Ainsworth.*

"Which Moses spake to ALL." An objection raised by some to these words, and thence to the value of the book, is that all Israel could not hear. In answer to this, it is said Whitefield was heard distinctly half a mile off. In Australia the "coey" can be heard at a distance of two, or even three miles. Where the air is clear and elastic, as it is in some localities, sound is heard a very long way off. That such was the case in the Sinaitic peninsula seems almost certain from a passage in Dean Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine:" "Among the characteristics of Sinai, one must not be omitted—the deep stillness, and consequent reverberations of the human voice. From the highest point of Rās Sasāfeh to its lowest peak, a distance of sixty feet, the page of a book, distinctly but not loudly read, was perfectly audible; and every remark of the various groups of travellers, descending from the heights of the same point, rose clearly to those immediately above them. It was the belief of the Arabs who conducted Niebuhr, that they could make themselves heard across the Gulf of Akaba; a belief doubtless exaggerated, yet probably originated or fostered by the great distance to which, in these regions, the voice can actually be carried."

A question sometimes raised with regard to these early books of the Bible is, how were they preserved? The following may assist some in the presence of this difficulty:—

"Various doubts have sometimes been thrown out as to the existence of writings at this period. Waiving the evidence of the Mosaic records, we may remark that hieroglyphical inscriptions were known upon stone in Egypt at least as early as the fourth dynasty, or B.C. 2450; that inscribed bricks were common in Babylonia about two centuries later, and that writing upon papyruses, both in the hieroglyphics and the hieratic characters, was familiar to the Egyptians under the 18th and 19th dynasties, which is exactly the time to which the Mosaic records would belong. It seems certain



that Moses, if educated by a daughter of one of the Ramesside kings, would be well acquainted with the Egyptian method of writing with ink upon the papyrus; while it is also probable that Abraham, who emigrated not earlier than the 19th century before our era from the great Chaldean capital Ur, would have brought with and transmitted to his descendants the alphabetic system with which the Chaldeans of his day were acquainted. There is thus every reason to suppose that writing was familiar to the Jews when they quitted Egypt; and the mention of it as a common practice in the books of Moses is in perfect accordance with what we know of the condition of the world at the time from other sources.

"Some writers urge that the Jews could not have learned alphabetic writing from the Egyptians, since 'the mode of representing ideas to the eye, which the Egyptians employed till a period long subsequently, was *widely different* from the alphabetic writing of the Hebrews.' But the difference was not really very great. It is a mistake to suppose that the Egyptian writing was, except to a very small extent, symbolical. Both in the hieroglyphic and the hieratic, as a general rule, *the words are spelt phonetically first*, and are then followed by a symbol or symbols."—*Rawlinson's Bampton Lectures.*

Ver. 2. "This verse seems misplaced; it should come in between vers. 19, 20."—*Horsley*; cf. also Dr. Wall, Kennicott, &c.

"Transcribers are apt to transpose letters, words, or sentences. . . . Transposition of verses may be found in Lamentations ii. iii. and iv."—*Jahn.*

"*Eleven days' journey.*" "So many days' march for a foot army; but Philo, the Jew, saith a horseman might do it in three days (*triduo confici potuit*)."—*Trapp.*

"If it be objected that they spent more days in that journey (Num. xi.-xiii.), we answer that Moses might mean there only the days in which they were upon the march. For according to Adrichomius, who had been upon the spot, the journey itself was too short to

take eleven days. However, no wonder they were eleven days going it, considering the great number of their flocks, and the bulk and weight of their carriage."—*Bibliotheca Biblica.*

"The way was plain, and known between Horeb, whither God brought them on purpose to serve Him, and Kadesh Barnea, which was the beginning of an habitable country (cf. Num. xiii. 26, xx. 16)."—*Maimonides.*

"There is another route, not along the plain of the Arabah and by Mount Seir, but over the high ground to the west."—*Annotated Paragraph Bible.*

"Kadesh is named as the southern point of the Promised Land. In this verse, as in the first, the mind of the reader seems directed to the past history. It was but eleven days' journey from the Mountain of the Covenant to the Promised Land, yet in the fortieth year the chosen people were still in the wilderness."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

"Eleven days' journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea;" and yet, in God's providence, the people required *forty years* to accomplish it. What takes the shortest time is not always the best path. Desert wandering was a preparation for the destined goal. However diversified the opinions of men in religion, all are agreed that the end and aim of life is not *here*. Life is but a preparation. Man's true destiny is immortality. Two things necessary for the man who would reach his true destiny—

I. That we may reach our true destiny, **Christ must take hold of us.** Several forces in society are laying hold of men—ambition, avarice, lust, pleasure, pride, superstition. One or more, perhaps all, grasp and hold men. They extend around him like some dense poisoning fog, robbing the man of both light and strength. While environed with such, or indeed any form of sin, Christ would break His way into us with help. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners" (cf. similar texts; cf. also 1 Tim. i. 14, 16; 1 Pet. ii. 3; Acts x. 36, xiii. 38, 39; Col. ii. 13).

II. That we may reach our true destiny, **we must take hold of Christ.**



(*a.*) We take hold of Christ by faith in Him.

(*b.*) We show our faith in Him as well as our love to Him by keeping His commandments (John xiv. 15, xv. 10; James ii. 17, 18; Gal. v. 6).

(*c.*) We also take hold of Christ by taking refuge in His atonement.

"In the East there is a tree which is a non-conductor of electricity. The people know it, and, when a storm comes, they flee to it for safety. Beautiful picture of the Saviour! Beautiful emblem of Calvary! It is a non-conductor of wrath. Get underneath it, and you are safe for ever."—*Thomas Jones*.

Ver. 3. "Fortieth year" of Israel's coming out of Egypt. In the first month of this year, Mary (Miriam), Moses's sister, died (Num. xx. 1). In the first day of the fifth month thereof, Aaron, his brother, died (Num. xxxiii. 38); and now, at the end of the year, Moses himself dieth, when he had repeated the law, and renewed the covenant between God and *His people* Israel.—*Ainsworth*.

Moses spoke what the Lord had commanded him; in other words, Moses gave the people what God had given him (*cf.* Acts iii. 6). Though the words were Moses's, the thing uttered was of God. Some speak according to the wisdom of the world: they can tell much about its craft, villany, rottenness, hollowness; and they preach *selfishness*, more or less refined, as a means of personal defence, and the true source of success. Some speak according to one thing; others according to something else: Moses spoke according to what God had given him. He therefore spoke God's truth.

I. Because Moses spoke God's truth he uttered what would be advantageous to the people. The path of happiness is the way of wisdom. Wisdom is happiness as well as pleasant (Prov. viii.). True wisdom is the fear of God (Job xxviii. 28). The man who declares God's truth instructs in wisdom and leads men to happiness. Happiness is what men are seeking. Those who conduct others into happiness meet an universal want. Blessed is the man

who supplies widespread demands! He gives bread to the hungry.

"The happy have whole days, and these they use;

The unhappy have but hours, and those they lose."—*Dryden*.

"True happiness (if understood)  
Consists alone in doing good."

—*Somerville*.

"No man is blest by accident or guess;  
True wisdom is the price of happiness."

—*Young*.

"The only happiness a brave man ever troubles himself with asking much about is the happiness to get his work done. Not 'I can't eat!' but 'I can't work!'—that was the burden of all wise complaining among men."—*T. Carlyle*.

"Happiness is no other than soundness and perfection of mind."—*Antoninus*.

"Happiness . . . the inward complacency we find in acting reasonably."—*Atterbury*.

"There are two ways of being happy: we may either diminish our wants or augment our means; either will do; the result is the same. It is for each man to decide for himself, and do what happens to be the easier. If you are idle, or sick, or poor, however hard it may be to diminish your wants, it will be harder to augment your means. If you are active and prosperous, or young and in good health, it may be easier for you to augment your means than diminish your wants. But if you are wise, you will do both at the same time, . . . and if you are very wise, you will do both in such a way as to augment the general happiness of society."—*B. Franklin*.

"Religion directs us rather to secure inward peace than outward ease."—*Tillotson*.

"The happiness of life consists, like the day, not in single flashes (of light), but in one continuous mild serenity. The most beautiful period of the heart's existence is in this calm, equable light, even though it be only moonlight or twilight. Now the mind alone can obtain for us this heavenly cheerfulness and peace."—*Richer*.

II. Because Moses spoke what God gave him, he could speak—

- (a.) With courage.  
 (b.) With power.  
 (a.) With courage—God on his side.

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears;  
 Where duty bids, he confidently steers,  
 Faces a thousand dangers at her call,  
 And, trusting in his God, surmounts them  
 all."  
 —Cowper.

"Courage consists, not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing it and conquering it."—Richter.

"A great deal of talent is lost in the world for the want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves a number of obscure men, who have remained in obscurity because their timidity has prevented them from making a first effort; and who, if they could have been induced to begin, would in all probability have gone great lengths in the career of fame."—Sidney Smith.

"The truest courage is always mixed with circumspection; this being the quality which distinguishes the courage of the wise from the hardness of the rash and foolish."—Jones of Naylands.

"Courage mounteth with occasion."  
 —Shakespeare.

An example of courage.—Henry III., king of France, one day said to Palissy the potter, who was a Calvinist, that "he would be compelled to give him (Palissy) up to his enemies unless he changed his religion." "You have often said to me, sire," was the undaunted reply of Palissy, "that you pitied me; but as for me, I pity you, who have given utterance to such words as, 'I shall be compelled.' These are unkingly words; and I say to you, in royal phrase, that neither the Guises, nor all your people, nor yourself, are able to compel a humble manufacturer of earthenware to bend his knee to statues."

(b.) With power: he would speak as one having authority, and not as the scribes (cf. Matt. vii. 29). His words were not the echoes of another man's experience: the words spoken represent things real and living in his own heart.

"There is no keeping back the power we have;  
 He hath no power who hath no power to use."  
 —Bailey.

"Power shows the man."—Pittachus.

"He speaks with power, because as strong as heaven's heat, and as its brightness clear" (Hill); or "as the rock of ocean, that stems a thousand wild waves on the shore."—Campbell.

III. Because Moses spoke what God gave him to speak, he relieved himself of a great responsibility.

(a.) Commissions are sometimes intrusted to men by God which they are afraid to execute. They thereby entail calamity upon themselves and all connected with them (cf. Jonah).

(b.) Duties imposed by God, if neglected, bring desolation on the man and his family (cf. Achan, Judges vii.).

(c.) Knowledge, wisdom, visions of the Divine glory, are vouchsafed to men to be used for the improvement of the world, the upholding of the Church, and the honour of God. If misused, the consequences will be terrible (cf. Balaam, Solomon, our own Lord Byron).

(d.) Money, influence, opportunity, is intrusted to many in these days. Such is not to be lavished on ourselves. God gave it: He expects it to be used in His service. Moses recognised this. His power, his thoughts, came from God, he used them for God, and therefore spoke what God gave him to speak. He thus relieved himself of a great responsibility. To all are intrusted "talents"—five, two, one. If we hide, or misuse, or waste, God will punish, and take from us even what we have (cf. Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," iv. 3—

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,

And we must take the current when it  
 serves,  
 Or lose our venture."

"Opportunity has hair in front, behind she is bald; if you seize her by the forelock you may hold her, but, if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her again."

"Miss not the occasion; by the forelock take  
 That subtle power, the never-halting Time,  
 Lest a mere moment's putting off should  
 make  
 Mischance almost as heavy as a crime."  
 —Wordsworth.

"All men, if they work not as in a Great Taskmaster's eye, will work wrong,

work unhappily for themselves, and for you.”—*Carlyle*.

“Thousands of men breathe, move, and live, pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? They do not partake of good in the world, and none were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke, could be recalled, and so they perished; their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue.”—*Chalmers*.

“No man is born unto himself alone.

Who lives unto himself, he lives to none:  
The world’s a body, each man a member is,  
To add some measure to the public bliss.  
Where much is given, there much shall be required.”  
—*Quarles*.

Ver. 4. “After he had slain Sihon.”

If Samson had not turned aside to see the lion that not long before he had slain, he had not found the honey in the carcass (Judges xiv. 8). So if we recognise not our dangers, deliverances, and achievements, we shall neither taste how sweet the Lord is nor return Him His due praise. So true thankfulness is required.

I. Recognition.

II. Estimation.

III. Retribution (*cf.* Ps. cxvi. 3, 7, 12.—*Trapp*).

The slaughter of Sihon and Og was an encouragement to Israel for their after wars, and an argument to move them unto thankful obedience to the law now repeated.—*Ainsworth*.

“Sihon, the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon.”

For situation of Heshbon, *cf.* “Critical Notes.” Meaning of Heshbon is “stronghold.” Sihon dwelt in a stronghold. Here was shelter and safety. In doing this he showed his wisdom. But the wisest is sometimes unwise. Sihon betrayed his humanity. He left his stronghold, and so was guilty of two foolish things: he left a stronghold, and he joined the heathen to fight against God and His people. These

words are fraught with instruction, for they bring Sihon before us as an *example* and *warning*.

I. Sihon as an example. He did well to dwell in a stronghold.

(a.) A stronghold is a place fortified by nature or art: it is made strong by God or man. It is a place of security. The *soul* needs a place of security where to flee from spiritual foes. The Psalmist frequently spoke of God as his fortress (*cf.* Ps. xi. 2, xxxi. 3, lxxi. 3, xci. 2, cxliv. 2).

Shakespeare has well said—

“God is our fortress, in whose conquering  
name

Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks”

To which we may add from the same writer—

“It is a fortified residence ‘gainst the tooth of  
Time,  
And rasure of Oblivion.”

To the Christian, God in Christ is *the* stronghold. Though the imagery for the most part (Christ as a Rock) is that of a *foundation* (Matt. vii. 24; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 8), yet the metaphor is open in other places for other interpretation (*cf.* 1 Cor. x. 4). Christ as a rock is a rock to be made use of by man. Man is to use Christ as a foundation to build upon. Christ will be to men now what the rock was to Israel in the desert: *that* whence flows the stream of spiritual life. Men are to drink of this water or build on this foundation—it matters not which metaphor is used—by *faith* (*cf.* Acts xvi. 31; 1 Cor. iii. 10–16; John xvi. 7).

(b.) Where a man has security he has peace. Because the Christian feels secure in Christ he rests. Dwell on the *power of faith* in producing a sense of security and rest (*cf.* Binney’s Pract. Nat. of Faith).

II. Sihon as a warning. He left the stronghold where he had enjoyed peace and protection to join the enemies of God. No better warning for the young. If we forsake God, God will forsake us. “Those that honour me I will honour.” “Those that seek shall find.” There are two sources of temptation to the inexperienced: *inquisitiveness* and *pleasure*.

(a.) Inquisitiveness has not infre-



quently tempted the young to leave the safe shelter of faith in Christ to dabble in the muddy currents of scientific and philosophic *speculation*, and to rush into the storms raised by supposed discoveries of unbelief. Such have quickly found they trod a path beset with thorns. To such Sihon is a warning.

(b.) Pleasure has induced men to forsake the garden about the Cross, where Rest, Joy, Safety, and Peace lingered, notwithstanding the transverse shadows upon the ground, to taste fruits of trees that grew beyond. They were not satisfied with what Christ gave. The angels' food sickens. They lust for the things of Egypt (*cf.* Eve in the garden). The Bible is thrown aside for the novel. The prayer-meeting is exchanged for the play. Virtue sometimes even is lost (*cf.* Samson). Contrast the choice of Hercules in Xenophon's "Memorabilia."

"To what gulpha

A single deviation from the track  
Of human duties lead."

—Byron.

(c.) Gain and worldly reward have induced some to forsake God and His Church (*cf.* conduct of Balaam, Judas; Num. xxiii. 10, xxxi. 8, 16; Mic. vi. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11).

Men in the present day desire the "wages of unrighteousness" and "the pleasures of sin," and for them pay the price, "unrighteousness," "sin," *the DEATH of their soul*: they betray "the Lord of life and glory," "crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Let such take warning of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who forsook his stronghold to join the enemies of God.

Ver. 5. "In the end of this fortieth year, in the beginning of the month Shebat, Moses called the people together, saying, The time of my death draweth nigh; if any one therefore hath forgot anything that I have delivered, let him come and receive it; or, if anything seem dubious, let him come that I may *explain* it. And so they say in Siphri, If any one have forgotten any constitution, let him come and hear it the second time; if he need to have anything unfolded, let him come and hear the *explanation* of it."—*Maimonides* on this verse.

"Began Moses to declare." "*Explain.*"—*Patrick*.

He "began," or, better perhaps, "undertook," to "declare the law," *i.e.*, explain and elucidate it. Such is the force of the Hebrew verb בָּרַח (*bārāḥ*), a word implying the pre-existence of the matter on which the process is employed, and so the substantial identity of the Deuteronomic legislation with that of the previous books. LXX. διασαφῆσαι: Vul. *explanare*.—*Speaker's Commentary*.

"Began." Willingly took upon him, for the word implies willingness and contentedness (*cf.* Gen. xviii. 27). So all ministers should feed their flocks "willingly and of a ready mind" (1 Pet. v. 2). Moses began to declare as Jesus (*cf.* Luke xii. 1; Matt. xvi. 6). "Disciples began to pluck," &c. (Matt. xii. 1).

"To declare." To make *plain, clearly manifest* to the understanding of the people, as in Hab. ii. 2. A thing is said to be made plain in writing that he may run that readeth it.—*Ainsworth*.

וְהָיָה = to be *willing, not began*. In Gen. xviii. 27, this word is rendered by "I have taken upon me" (Exod. ii. 21). "Moses was content."—*Delgado*.

The best inheritance that a rich man can leave to his children is Christian instruction in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, and thorough education in the arts and sciences.—*Geier*.

He who really fears God will say nothing concerning Him but that which proceeds from his innermost heart, and vow nothing but what he is resolved inviolably to keep.—*Hengstenberg*.

"Declare." The Hebrew word means properly to engrave, to hew in stone: which is there used of the deeper impressing and imprinting on the heart by means of exhortation and explanation.—*Gerlach*.

The address of Moses is in perfect harmony with his situation. He speaks like a dying father to his children. The words are earnest, inspired, impressive. He looks back over the whole of the forty years of their wandering in the desert, reminds the people of all the blessings they have received, of the ingratitude with which they have so often

repaid them, and of the judgments of God, and the love that continually broke forth behind them; he explains the laws again and again, and adds what is necessary to complete them, and is never weary of urging obedience to them in the warmest and most emphatic words, because the very life of the nation was bound up with this; he surveys all the storms and the conflicts which they have passed through, and, beholding the future in the past—viz., apostasy, punishment, and pardon—continue to repeat themselves in the future also.—*Hengstenberg.*

“On *this* side Jordan,” &c., &c.

Moses repeated the law as soon as he had opportunity, and circumstances required it. He did not wait till the promised land was entered. The work of *to-day* was not delayed till the morrow. It was done at once. He did it where he was—in the land of the Gentiles—surrounded with heathen—in the country of foes. (*Cf.* here Carlyle’s words “America is *here* or nowhere.”) Trapp with no little humour remarks on these words, “And he was not long about it. A ready heart makes a riddance of God’s work, for being oiled with the Spirit, it becomes lithe and nimble and quick of despatch.” Three practical hints—

I. What is to be done do at once. Moses on *this* side of Jordan began to speak. Had Moses been a boy at school, he would not have put off his prayers till he got home where there were no school-fellows to chaff. He would have said them then and there.

“Let us take the instant by the forward lip.”  
—*Shakespeare.*

“Shun delays, they breed remorse;  
Take thy time while time is lent thee;  
Creeping snails have weakest force;  
Fly their faults, lest thou repent thee.  
Good is best when soonest wrought;  
Lingering labours come to nought.”

—*Southwell.*

“At thirty man suspects himself a fool;  
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plans;  
At fifty chides his infamous delay,  
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;  
In all the magnanimity of thought  
Resolves; and re-resolves: then dies the same.”  
—*Young.*

“We find out some excuse or other for deferring good resolutions.”—*Addison.*

“There is no moment like the present.”—*Maria Edgeworth.*

Thou art a passenger, and thy ship hath put into harbour for a few hours. The tide and the wind serve, and the pilot calls thee to depart, and thou art amusing thyself and gathering shells and pebbles on the shore till they set sail without thee. So every Christian who, being on his voyage to a happy eternity, delays and loiters, and thinks and acts as if he were to dwell here for ever.—*Jortin.*

II. Do not think that there will be a more propitious time than the present.

(1.) Dallying with duties does not diminish difficulties.

(2.) Delay positively increases difficulties. Power unused decreases. If duty is deferred a day, we are a day’s wasted strength the weaker.

(3.) We know what is to be done *now*: to-morrow it may be forgotten. Cares of life will usurp attentions. The duties are pushed aside—choked down—killed. Weeds grow faster than corn (*cf.* parable of the sower). Cares and duties come quicker than time.

“Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into conduct. Nay, properly, conviction is not possible till then, inasmuch as all speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that “doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action. On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: ‘*Do the duty which lies nearest thee,*’ which thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty will already have become clearer.”—*Carlyle.*

III. Do some good things in this life—in the desert, so called, on *this* side Jordan. Do not wait till heaven is reached, that angels alone may be witness of your good deeds. Moses did not defer till the promised land was



reached. He did what he was able out of the promised land. It was well he did. He never reached Canaan. Had he put off all till *then*, nothing would have been done. Perhaps you may never reach heaven: probably you will not if there is so little of the spirit of Christ in you as to permit an utterly indolent life. Remember Dives! Do something worth remembering, that you may have one pleasant memory to carry into hell with you: perhaps a sufficiency of such reminiscences may so brighten the gloom of those infernal regions as to make the hell a heaven.

"How dangerous to defer those moments which conscience is solemnly preaching to the heart! If they are neglected, the difficulty and indisposition are increasing every month."—*John Foster*.

Ver. 6. The first and introductory address of Moses to the people is here commenced. It extends to ch. iv. 40, and is divided from the second discourse by vers. 41-49, which are obviously of a different character from those which precede and follow them. Addressing the people on the very threshold of the promised land, Moses summarily recalls to them the manifold proofs they had experienced of the care and faithfulness of God toward them, and the manifold instances of their own perverseness and rebellion. These their sins had shut them out during a whole generation from the inheritance covenanted to be given to their fathers. The warning is thus most effectively pointed—that they should not by new transgressions debar themselves from those blessings which even now lay before their eyes; and the way is appropriately prepared for that recapitulation and reinforcement of the law of the covenant which it is the main purpose of Deuteronomy to convey.—*Speaker's Commentary*.

"Dwelt long enough." "From the third month of the first year (Exod. xix. 1) to twentieth day of the second year after they came out of Egypt (Num. x. 11), they stayed at Mount *Sinai*, which is the same with *Horeb*, they being only two tops of the same mountain, one of

them something higher than the other, as they are described by those who have taken a view of them."—*Patrick*.

Ainsworth more correctly says: "They came to that mount in the third month after their departure out of Egypt (Exod. xii. 1, 2), and removed from the mount 'the twentieth of the second month in the second year' (Num. x. 11, 12); so they remained there almost a year, where they received the law, or Old Testament, and had made a Tabernacle for God to dwell among them: from thence God called them by word and sign, the cloud removing (Num. x. 11, 13, 33); to journey toward Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, the figure of their heavenly inheritance by faith in Christ. The law is not for man to continue under, but for a time, till they be fitted and brought unto Christ (see Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18, iv. 1-5; Heb. iii. 18, 19, iv. 6-11.)"

"The great Primate of Ireland thinks that Moses spoke from here to chap. iv. 40 on February 20, and on the Sabbath day."—*Bibliotheca Biblica*.

"*In Horeb*." It has been remarked as a discrepancy that Sinai of the other books is always called Horeb in Deuteronomy. But this is met by the note in Exod. xix. 2, where it is shown that Horeb is the general name of the whole mountain, and Sinai is the special name of a particular part of it. This distinction is scrupulously observed everywhere in the Pentateuch. The name Sinai is, however, not wanting in the book, for we find it in xxxiii. 2 (*cf.* long note on Exod. xix. 2, "Kitto's Family Bible," Sinai, in Dic.—*Kitto*).

Humbled they must be, and hammered for a season: sense of misery goes before a sense of mercy.—*Trapp*.

Dr. Wright says "*by Horeb*," but I know not his reason, as they were "*in Horeb*."—*Delgado*.

"Dwelt long enough" implies that the purpose for which Israel was taken to Horeb had been answered, *i.e.*, they had been furnished with laws and ordinances requisite for the fulfilment of the covenant, and could now remove to Canaan to take possession of the promised Land. The word of Jehovah men-



tioned here is not found in this form in the previous history ; but, as a matter of fact, it is contained in the Divine instructions that were preparatory to their removal (Num. i. 4, ix. 15, x. 20), and the rising of the cloud from the Tabernacle, which followed immediately afterwards (Num. x. 1). The fixed use of the name Horeb to designate the mountain group in general, instead of the special name Sinai, which is given to the particular mountain upon which the law was given, is in keeping with the rhetorical style of the book.—*Keil and Delitzsch.*

"*Dwelt.*" "Sitten much."—*Ainsworth.*

"The Lord our God spake unto us." Benisch renders the verse—"The Eternal our God," &c. These words are powerfully suggestive of fellowship with the unseen universe. Contact with the verse is like wandering in the depth of some virgin forest, dark, boundless, at midnight the twinkling stars above only revealing the intense, mysterious darkness, and the hidden terror. Whether this speech was audible or silent, whether heard by the sense of the imagination, matters very little. The word God spoke *was* heard *somehow*, and to the hearer the word was real, as well as the speaker. Two thoughts suggested here—

I. Man has a capacity to hold communion with God.

(a.) This is done by means of a special and peculiar faculty. As the eye sees, and the heart loves ; so the spirit that is in man communes with the Spirit that is in God.

(b.) This faculty may be *alive* or *dead*. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*" (cf. Gen.).

II. Man's power of hearing God depends upon his relationship with God. When Christ heard His Father *speak*, the people said it "thundered." When Paul heard the voice of Christ by the way, those with him heard it *not* (Acts xxii. 9). When the Spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove, *John the Baptist* and *Jesus* beheld it, but we do not know that the *people* saw it.

"Communion with God will, even in this life, greatly increase our conformity to Him ; the truth of this is confirmed

by common observation. **Assimilation** is always a consequence of association with others. There is in man a natural aptness and tendency to imitate those who are his most constant companions. If two persons very dissimilar in disposition, habits, and manner of expression, were for a few days only to associate together, they would visibly approximate each other. Just so the praying soul, by conversing with God, in some measure assimilated to His likeness. The object of worship will in some measure always be the object of imitation. God is the standard of moral excellence, and by contemplating His perfections our corruptions are counteracted, His image is enstamped upon us, and our minds are raised above their natural level. Thus the exercise of fervent prayer elevates, strengthens, purifies, comforts, and enriches the believing soul. They who would be rich in grace must be much in prayer to God : He will beautify them with the beams of His holiness, as Moses's face shone when he returned from the mount ; 'beholding in the exercise of faith and prayer the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.' And herein the work of prayer on earth resembles that of praise in heaven ; for which more exalted worship it is, no doubt, intended ultimately to prepare us."—*Christian Family's Assistant.*

Anything lower than a life of communion with God in Christ is repudiated by the Christian idea as an imperfect and sinful life. It may possess much that the world calls virtue—it may be honest, industrious, and self-sacrificing—it may even show a strength and consistent manliness that some manifestations of the Christian life are found to fail in ; but, nevertheless, it is of an inferior quality. It not merely comes short of it, but it does not really touch the Christian ideal ; for it is impossible to separate the life of man from God without fatal injury to that life. If God is, and if we are His creatures, our being cannot grow into any healthy or perfect form while we remain divorced in spirit and in love from Him. Certain elements of character may flourish in us, but cer-

tain others, and still more important, elements must be wanting.—*Dr. Tulloch.*

"You will find it more difficult to walk closely with Jesus in a calm than in a storm, in easy circumstances than in straits. A Christian never falls asleep in the fire or in the water, but grows drowsy in the sunshine."—*John Berridge.*

Communion with heaven—

"When one who holds communion with the  
skies  
Has filled his urn where the pure waters  
rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner  
things,  
'Tis even as an angel shook his wings;  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide."  
—*Cowper.*

Ver. 7. "Turn you, take your journey," *i.e.*, "Resume the journey long intermitted."—*Patrick.*

"The Amorites, as the most warlike and powerful people, stand here for all the Canaanites."—*Gerlach.*

"Mount of the Amorites," *i.e.*, to the mountain district occupied by the Amorites, reaching into the Negeb, and part of the territory assigned to the tribe of Judah. The Amorites, as the leading people of Canaan, here stand for the nations of that country generally (see ver. 44); and "the mountain of the Amorites, and the places nigh thereunto (or more literally, "All its neighbours"), denote the whole district, which is more particularly specified in the concluding part of the verse."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

"Canaan was naturally divided, according to the character of the ground, into the *Arabah*, the modern Ghor; the *mountain*, the subsequent mountains of Judah and Ephraim; the *lowlands* (*sh'phêlâh*), *i.e.*, the low flat country lying between the mountains of Judah and the Mediterranean Sea, and stretching down to the promontory of Carmel down to Gaza, which is intersected by only small undulations and ranges of hills, and generally includes the hill country which formed the transition from the mountains to the plains, though the two are distinguished in Josh. x. 40, and xii. 8; the *south land* (*nēgēb*), lit. dryness, aridity, from נָגַב, to be dry or

arid. Hence the dry, parched land, in contrast to the well-watered country (Josh. xv. 19; Judges i. 15), was the name given to the southern district of Canaan, which forms the transition from the desert to the strictly cultivated land, and bears for the most part the character of a steppe, in which tracts of sand and heath are intermixed with shrubs, grass, and vegetables, whilst here and there corn is also cultivated; a district, therefore, which was better fitted for grazing than for agriculture, though it contained a number of towns and villages (*cf.* Josh. xv. 21-23); and the *sea-shore*, *i.e.*, the generally narrow strip of coast running along by the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa to the Tyrian Ladder, or Râs el Âbiad, just below Tyre. The special mention of *Lebanon* in connection with the land of the Canaanites, and the enumeration of the separate parts of the land, as well as the extension of the eastern frontier as far as the Euphrates, are to be attributed to the rhetoricalfulness of the style."—*Keil and Delitzsch.*

Ver. 5-8. Subject: God's address to His people. "The *Lord our God* spake" (ver. 6). The words were spoken to Israel. Israel in a special and pre-eminent sense was God's people (Exod. iii. 7, v. 1; *cf.* "My people" in Concordance). They were the covenant people as far as the covenant then extended. Though the *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ, yet the *Law* was given by Moses. The Jew had an earnest of the future greater gift. Of this fact we are in a measure reminded by the sketch of their history given in the chapter, as likewise by the relation of Moses to their history. He was the prophet. The prophet is the mouthpiece of God. Moses spoke and acted only for God: he was but the vicegerent: God was the true King of Israel. His glory was displayed to Israel in miracle and providential protection. But even more specially and pre-eminently than the Jew is the Christian Church the people of God. To such this passage, in its spiritual application, is full of instruction.

I. God in His address to His people enjoins *action*. "Not slothful" is the

apostolic command. "Ye have dwelt" (Ainsworth: 'sitten much') "long enough." The time of inactivity is over. "Turn you, take your journey." God enjoins on His people to be like Himself. He is ever active. The whole seven days round *His* energies are going forth in creating and blessing. For six days He creates: on the seventh He is active in blessing (*cf.* Gen. ii. 1, 3). Not less active than the Father is the Son. Week-day and Sabbath He exerted Himself to make man happier and the world brighter. His reason for this He gives in John v. 17. It is not unnatural, therefore, that God seeks in His people qualities so largely developed in Himself. God does *not* want idlers in His vineyard. Man was put into the garden of the world to work (*cf.* Gen. ii. 15). In the parable, too, the men had to go and *labour* who received the penny (*cf.* Matt. xx. 8). "Call the *labourers*."

However, God permits *some* rest. Life is not all work. Storm and calm, battle and peace, make history.

But still the law of life and growth is, the more we do within certain limits the more we are able to do. This is true both physically and spiritually. People of impaired health by proper exercise become strong. The morally weak are strengthened by the exercise of trial. It was on this account that Paul "gloried in tribulation." It made him spiritually greater. So men find now. The more kind a man tries to be, the more he is. So with faith, patience, hope. *Cf.* Abraham's faith and its growth: first he leaves home; then he offers his son in obedience to the Divine injunction uttered in his heart. It is easier to leave home than sacrifice one's own child. But Abraham was led up to this latter. God speaks both in the words of Scripture and in the voice of life's circumstances and conditions, ever eloquent, saying, "Turn you, take your journey." In other words, "*Do something*." As children of God, be like your fathers. Let what energies you possess go forth in activity, and thus by the action of to-day prepare for greater activity on the morrow.

II. God advises with regard to the

nature, direction, and extent of this action.

(a.) *Nature* of the action. Let it be action with a purpose in view. Some people are always beating the air. Much energy is spent in noise and flurry, but no work is done. Have an aim in life. "Go to the mount of the Amorites."

(b.) *Direction* of the action. Two hints with regard to that—

(1.) Let it go forth. It does not do for a man's action to turn in on himself. Uniform selfishness is as injurious as constant introspection; and ceaseless introspection is as ruinous as unmixed selfishness. Live for others as well as self: *work* for others.

(2.) This is modified by another hint. Go to what is near *first*. In kindly thought for the universe, a man is not to forget his own. *Cf.* 1 Tim. v. 8. Jesus when dying for the world did not forget His own mother at His feet.

(c.) *Extent* of the action. Though we are to begin with what is near, though what is at hand is of *primary* import, we are not to restrict our thoughts nor our actions to our own. *Begin* at the near, then proceed to what is more remote, till the whole world is affected by your life: *e.g.*—

(1.) First to the *plain*. Read part of the Bible easily understood and applied. Interpret providence as far as you can trace a *Father's* hands. What cannot be understood leave for a future day and clearer lights.

(2.) After this go to the *hill*. Do not mind a difficulty sometimes. A little adversity strengthens the soul. Trust is perfected in suffering. Many a seed has matured into a noble plant when cast down into the earth.

(3.) Now you may proceed to the *vale*. Reverently step where the long, deep shadows fall. There is the "valley of the shadow of death"—"the valley of humiliation"—"the valley of vision." Here the soul is quickened and brought into that region of experience that Paul designates as being "hidden with Christ in God."

(4.) Thus prepared with "the whole armour of God," go to the "*south*." Here were hills infested with foes. So



the Christian, after mounting the Hill of Transfiguration with Christ, where for a moment the Divine glory is manifested, has to go back again to a world where man has to contend with demons (*cf.* Matt. xvii. 14-18)—where he has to grapple with many a spiritual foe, wolves in sheep's clothing, the lion that seeks to devour, the subtle serpent. But go to the "south." God "has not called us to bondage"—the bondage of the cloister: or to linger in dim-lighted religious cell, as if life was to be consumed in feeling. "Fight the good fight of faith." Go where the enemy awaits.

(5.) Then comes the reward. Having gone to the "south," the people might turn aside to the sea. Here an entirely new field of experience was to break upon their vision. Hitherto they had wandered amid arid sands and rocky wastes. Now they come to the sea, where the beauty and glory of the heavens would be reflected in the silent depths of the waters, grace and mystery being added (*cf.* Ps. cvii. 23, 24). So does God bring the Christian after long and hard toil to gaze into those depths of love and grace which are as oceans mirroring the midnight skies.

(6.) After such revelation of God's glory and power, the people of God can go forth to war with the Canaanite. The kingdom of Christ is extended to Lebanon (the far north)—to the river (the far east). The whole world is filled with the glory of the Lord.

Such are the various stages of Christian experience and work. From what is simple to what is complex, from the near to the distant, the soul lives and labours till all be complete.

III. God, in His address, points out how rightly-directed action will bring its own reward. "Behold, I have set (*Heb.* 'given') the land before you: go in and possess."

(a.) True work is sure to bring recompense of some kind.

"If little labour, little are our gains;  
Man's fortunes are according to his pains."  
—*Herrick.*

It, first, brings *external* reward. A day's work brings the day's wages. The

sowings of spring are followed by the harvests of autumn.

It, secondly, brings an *internal* reward in a man's own nature and being.

"Service shall with steeled sinews toil,  
And labour shall refresh itself with hope."  
—*Shakespeare.*

"Moderate labour of the body conduces to the preservation of health, and cures many initial diseases."—*Dr. W. Harvey.*

"Excellence is never granted to man but as the reward of labour."—*Sir J. Reynolds.*

(b.) Show what *work* is. Distinguish work from pleasure. Pleasure is the expending of energy without any end or purpose save the sensations caused by the act of waste, whereby pleasure has been defined as "dissipating enjoyments;" work is energy expended for a purpose. In its idea it is conservative. Work is action to get a return for the energy so spent, both to recuperate and increase the power thus employed. Pleasure seeks nothing save the sensation; work demands a recompense. God promises to *work* its recompense. "Go in and possess."

Ver. 9. "I am not able." "Political and ecclesiastical labours are very great."  
—*Luther.*

"None have so hard a tug of it as magistrates and ministers."—*Trapp.*

"If we had not business and cares and fears above all private persons, we should be equal to the gods."—*Dio. Cassius.*

"Moses constrained to this not only by the consciousness of his own inability, but by the advice of Jethro and the command of God (*cf.* Exod. xviii. 14, 18, 19, 21, 23)."—*Ainsworth.*

"I am not able." "We do not read before now that Moses spake thus; but Jethro spoke thus, Exod. xviii., and gave advice (Exod. xviii. 21) to get help, which Moses took (ver. 24), and then told the people what Jethro said."—*Patrick.*

"At that time." After the giving of the law.—*Selden.*

"I spake unto you," &c. "It seems that in the following account two histories are comprised in one; the ap-

pointment of the judges at the advice of Jethro (Exod. xviii.) and the installing of the seventy elders by the communication of the Spirit to them (Num. xi. 16). The first institution, which was of man's origin, received its consecration by the latter act. The division of the whole people into corporations under heads, also inspired by the Spirit of God as Moses, made the whole unformed mass into one people."—*Gerlach*.

"I am not able," &c.

I. His was work entirely beyond social help. Such labour becomes more difficult from the loneliness of the worker. Many a minister feels his work hard through his solitude.

II. Such work often entails more self-denial than mortal man can endure. God's grace goes a long way. Still man has the weakness of the flesh to sap his energies. "It is not good for man to be alone."

III. It was work involving self-denial for the very people who caused him all his troubles and anxieties.

The character of Moses.

"The ancients are full of it. . . . His piety, his meekness, his patience and self-denial, his magnanimity, his impartiality, his public spirit and tender love to his nation, his wisdom and judgment, his learning, and all those adorning qualities and happy accomplishments that distinguished this great and excellent man (not even the gracefulness of his person omitted), are there mentioned with such handsome simplicity and plainness of style and narration, as is nowhere else to be found, and perhaps cannot be imitated; such as at once recommends the pattern of the man and vouches the truth of the story."—*Bibliotheca Biblica*.

"I am not able to bear you," &c. A tone of suffering and weariness is in these words. The true leaders of men are not infrequently compelled to go counter to the prejudice, vice, and sin of their age. Every age has repeated the past and foreshadowed the future in that particular. Moses was true to his vocation. Sorely he suffered.

I. The depravity of his age.

- (a.) The people a horde of barbarians.
- (b.) Coarse, selfish, idolatrous.
- (c.) Almost blind to the spiritual.

II. The magnanimity of his character.

(a.) True antidote of an evil generation is a magnanimous leader. More is done by example than by precept.

(b.) The burdens of life make a truly great character greater.

Compare with this the effect of the pure, magnanimous life of Jesus Christ on His generation—the Centurion, &c.

Ver. 10. The Lord God had multiplied the people. Their increase was not owing simply to a power in themselves. God is the actor.

"As the stars." "A greater number than can be told."—*Clapham Patrick*.

"The Lord our God hath multiplied you."

When Moses said this, it was with the impression that he had said one of the most inspiring and congratulatory things that he could say. Compare Ps. cxxvii. 5. "Happy is the man that has his quiver full." In no way could Moses have expressed his idea of God's beneficence more than this. The subject suggested to us here is the benignity of God. Three facts might well be considered in conjunction with this subject—

I. God's benignity is a fact ever before the eye of man's investigating intellect. Adduce Plato's: "God is beauty and love itself"—an outburst of adoration caused by His purified intellect gazing on the outspread universe in this genial atmosphere and refined light of grace.

What was it but this led Bishop Horne to exclaim, "When we rise fresh and vigorous in the morning, the world seems fresh too, and we think we shall never be tired of business or pleasure; but by the time the evening is come, we find ourselves heartily so; we quit all our enjoyments readily and gladly; we retire willingly into a little cell; we lie down in darkness, and resign ourselves to the arms of sleep with perfect satisfaction and complacency."

Or take again that beautiful passage of Emerson's—

"The method of nature : who could ever analyse it ? That rushing stream will not fail to be observed. We can never surprise nature in a corner ; never find the end of a thread ; never tell where to set the first stone. The bird hastes to lay her egg ; the egg hastens to be a bird. The wholeness we admire in the order of the world is the result of infinite distribution. Its smoothness is the smoothness of the pitch of the cataract. Its permanence is a perpetual inchoation. Every natural fact is an emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation. If anything could stand still, it would be crushed and dissipated by the torrent it resisted ; and if it were a mind, would be crazed as insane persons are—those who hold fast one thought, and do not flow with the course of nature ;—not the cause, but an ever-novel effect. Nature descends always from above. It is unbroken obedience. The beauty of these fair objects is imported into them from a metaphysical and eternal spring."

II. God's benignity is a fact ever impressing our general consciousness. Not only has the intellect its special sphere of observation, of means to end, and adjustment of cause to effect ; but the whole consciousness has that pressing upon it which makes the subject of it cry out in a wild rapture, "God is indeed good !"

III. God's benignity is a fact ever appealing to our faith. What is more startling than to be told that God is good. God is good ! and we think of the earthquake where thirty thousands went into the mystery of the shadows in a moment. The benign God ! and the storm and the shipwreck loom up as some phantom to haunt our peace. We think of widows : we hear the sob of the orphan. The maiden's love is blasted, and a weary soul goes on its solitary course for years, hoping that there may be a future, and that the spirit of the loved one hovers near.

But God shows His benignity by drawing near in sympathy. Hearts are not left to sigh alone. There is still a voice to be heard when "the thorn" is most painful, "My grace is sufficient."

It is in this profounder and tenderer way God's benignity constantly appeals unto our heart, and our heart's deepest faith.

Ver. 11. "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as He hath promised you."

Subject : The prosperity of Zion desired. Not to exert ourselves for those committed to us argues a want of love for them, but there is a bound to man's power. The care of the people devolving upon Moses proved too much for him. He therefore retired from the *whole* duty, and dealt only with the chief cases, relegating the remainder to magistrates. He had now arrived at the borders of Jordan and the last month of his life, and was enjoined by God to make a farewell memorial ; so the generation immediately coming after him, having the history of their fathers so deeply stamped upon them, might serve God with more fidelity than their fathers had. It was in this farewell he felt called upon to make a reference to the act instigated by Jethro—the appointing of magistrates—lest there might be any feeling on the part of the people at his so doing ; and, to show his zeal in their service, he concludes with this blessing : "The Lord God of your fathers," &c.

This benevolent wish of his will lead me to consider the prosperity of God's Israel—

1. As a matter of promise. To the promises of God relating to this subject Moses refers : "The Lord bless you, as *He hath promised you !*" God has promised innumerable blessings to those who are of Israel according to the flesh. Cf. Gen. xv. 5 ; Jer. xxxiii. 22 ; Deut. xxx. 5 ; Amos ix. 11-15 ; Zech. viii. 3-8, viii. 13, 18-23 ; Jer. xxx. 19. Innumerable blessings, too, has God promised to His spiritual Israel. That these are included in the wish of Moses there can be no doubt. Cf. Gen. xxii. 17, 18 ; Gal. iii. 7-9, 13, 14.

Let us, then, consider the prosperity of Israel—

II. As an object of desire. "Oh, that  
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the Lord God of our fathers would multiply His people a thousandfold, and bless them as He hath promised them !” If any of you need a stimulus to concur in this wish, reflect on—

(1.) The benefit that will accrue to every converted soul.

[Were we to contemplate a soul actually taken out of hell, and translated to a throne of glory in heaven, we should say indeed that such an one had reason to rejoice. Yet, what is it less than this that is done for every child of God ? Are we not doomed to perdition ? Is there any child of man that is not “by nature a child of wrath” ? consequently, if delivered from condemnation, “is he not a brand plucked out of the fire” ? Is he not at the very time that he is turned from darkness to light turned also “from the power of Satan unto God” ? Does he not actually “pass from death unto life” ? And is he not “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” ? Reflect then on this, as done for only one soul, and there is reason, abundant reason, for every benevolent person in the universe to pant for it. But consider it as extended to thousands and millions, yea, millions of millions, even the whole human race, and who should not pant and pray for that ? See what commotion is produced in heaven even by the conversion of one soul ; for “there is joy among the angels in the very presence of God over one sinner that repenteth.” And what must we be who feel so indifferent about the conversion and salvation of the whole world ? Verily we have need to blush and be confounded before God for the coldness with which we contemplate His promised blessings.]

(2.) The honour that will redound to God.

[Behold our fallen race ! Who is there amongst them that bears any measure of resemblance to the image in which man was created ? Who regards God ? Who does not practically say to God, “Depart from me ; I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways” ? But let a soul be apprehended by Divine grace, and converted to the faith of Christ, and what a different aspect does he then bear ! Verily, the whole work of creation does not so brightly exhibit the glory of God as does this new created being. Brilliant as are the rays of the noonday sun, they do not display even the natural perfections, and still less the moral perfections of the Deity, as he, the new-born soul, who, from the image of “his father the devil,” is transformed into the image of God Himself in “righteousness and true holiness.” Now, too, he begins to live unto his God, and by every possible means to exalt His glory in the world, acknowledging Him in all things, serving Him in all things, glorifying Him in all things. Is there a man that is in any respect sensible of his obligations to

God, and not desirous that such converts should be multiplied ? Did David “shed rivers of tears for those who kept not God’s law,” and shall not we weep and pray that such persons may be converted to God and made monuments of His saving grace ? But conceive of this whole world that is in rebellion against God converted thus, and God’s will done on earth as it is done in heaven ; and shall this be to us no object of desire ? Verily, we should take no rest to ourselves, nor give any rest to God, till He accomplish this blessed work, and till “all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of His Christ.”]

(3.) The happiness that will arise to the whole world.

[Every soul that is converted to God becomes “as a light” to those around him, and “salt,” to keep, as it were, from utter putrefaction the neighbourhood in which he dwells. In proportion, then, as these are multiplied, the very world itself assumes a different aspect. “Instead of the brier there grows up the fir-tree, and instead of the thorn there grows up the myrtle-tree,” till at last “the whole wilderness shall blossom as the rose,” and this “desert become as the garden of the Lord.” I need say no more. The wish of Moses is, I think, the wish of every one amongst you ; and you are all saying with David, “Blessed be God’s glorious name for ever ; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.” Amen and amen.]

You will ask, then, What shall we do to accelerate this glorious event ? God works by means. Learn a lesson from Moses’s act. He received assistance. Let the zeal of the Church be fanned into life. Let the Church help the clergy. Then will God’s kingdom come. [Abridged.]—*Simson*.

Ver. 11. In this book Moses repeats the chief laws to the people. This he does because the generations that first heard them had passed away : a new one was in its place. Much that had taken place he therefore repeats. This led him to refer to their trying and quarrelsome disposition, and the appointment of magistrates to deal with their several cases. The subject, to be considered thoroughly, would afford three ample heads of discourse, viz. :—

I. The *qualifications* required in those that were to be appointed *rulers* over the people. They were to be *wise* men, and understanding, and known among their tribes.

II. The *persons* to whom the *election*

or *choice* is referred, which were the several tribes over whom they were to rule: *Take ye*, or, *give ye*, as it is in the original, *i.e.*, choose ye, as the word signifies.

III. The *person* who *deputed* them to their office, and *invested* them with their authority: and that was Moses himself, their chief leader; he who was appointed over them by God, and under God on earth supreme. "Take ye wise men, &c., and I will make them rulers over you."

The first only is dealt with on this occasion, *i.e.*, this qualification of a ruler. "Choose wise men," &c. In speaking to which I shall—

(1.) Explain the terms in which these qualifications are expressed.

(2.) Show how necessary those qualifications are to form a good magistrate.

(3.) Set forth the great benefits and advantages which such magistrates are—(a.) to their sovereign, (b.) to the people ruled, and (c.) the honour they bring to themselves.—*Condensed from Wheatly on this passage.*

Ver. 11. "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more than ye are, and bless you, as He hath promised you." There was but one thought on this subject in the mind of both Moses and the Psalmist. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full:" and, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward." Such a view of a social problem, which is now such a difficult one to some of the most thoughtful, could only be taken by men who had a strong and living faith in the providence of God, and who lived in times and countries where food was more easily procured than it is now in civilised countries, and where the habits of the people were very simple. Still, if men were content to be more simple in habit and life, the same sentiment might be expressed to-day as was sung as a joyful song by Moses and the Psalmist. The words read in such a spirit as characterised these two writers suggest these two considerations—

I. That children ought to be esteemed

blessings, and that he who has a *numerous offspring* ought to be thankful to God for them: for children are the heritage of the Lord.

II. That God is the sole Author and Disposer of these blessings: "The Lord God . . . make, &c., and bless as He hath promised."

I. Children ought to be esteemed blessings, &c. It is a blessed thing to be the parent of a numerous offspring. For

(1.) Such a man is a *public blessing* to the kingdom in which he lives; for the riches of a kingdom consists in the number and multitude of its inhabitants. Cf. the conduct of the Romans, famed for the wisdom of their laws and prudence of politics, which was guided by this maxim from the first foundation of their government, and who endeavoured by all means in their power to augment the numbers of their people, and rather chose to make their city the asylum of the worst of men than want inhabitants. To this end they framed so many honorary laws, and granted so many and great privileges to the parents of many children.

(2.) A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing with respect to *private families*, and that mutual comfort and support which those who came originally out of the same loins yield to one another. These bonds are inseparable when the same interest are bound by natural affection.

(3.) A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing to the *parent himself*. The Jew looked forward to the Messiah being born of his family: the Christian can see a new heir of righteousness. There is joy in their birth: there is pleasure in their after-life if the child is trained aright.

II. God is the sole Author and Disposer of these blessings. Cf. Ps. cxxvii. 3. This blessing is called an heritage. An heritage is an estate got by ancestors, and descends to us lineally without our painstaking. God is our Ancestor, from whom we enjoy all favours.

Three lessons are gathered from the subject of this verse—

(a.) Let those who have no children

learn from hence to wait with patience the Divine pleasure, to continue in prayer and alms-deeds, and to be fruitful in good works; and if they have not children after the flesh, they will have a multitude who will call them blessed, and who in the endless ages of eternity will be to them as children.

(b.) Let those who have a numerous family of children be thankful to God for bestowing these blessings on them, and use their utmost endeavour to make them blessings indeed, by grounding them in the principles of religion and bringing them up soberly and virtuously to some lawful calling.

(c.) Those who have had children and are deprived of them, either by natural death, or, which is worse, by any unfortunate accident, may hence learn to resign themselves to the will of God, and entirely to depend on His good providence.—*Abstract of Sermon by Lewis Atterbury.*

"I know he's coming by this sign,—  
That baby's almost wild!

See how he laughs and crows and starts,—  
Heaven bless the merry child!  
He's father's self in face and limb,  
And father's heart is strong in him.  
Shout, baby, shout! and clap thy hands,  
For father on the threshold stands."

—*Mary Howitt.*

"I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us."—*Dickens.*

"Good Christian people! here lies for you an inestimable loan: take all heed thereof; in all carefulness employ it: with high recompense, or else with heavy penalty, will it one day be required back."—*Carlyle.*

"Be ever gentle with the children God has given you; watch over them constantly; reprove them earnestly, but not in anger. In the forcible language of Scripture, 'Be not bitter against them.' 'Yes, they are good boys,' I once heard a kind father say. 'I talk to them very much, but do not like to beat my children—the world will beat them.' It was a beautiful thought, though not elegantly expressed. Yes; there is not one child in the circle round the table, healthful and happy as they look now, on whose head, if long enough

spared, the storm will not beat. Adversity may wither them, sickness may fade, a cold world may frown on them, but amidst all, let memory carry them back to a home where the law of kindness reigned, where the mother's reproofing eye was moistened with a tear and the father frowned 'more in sorrow than in anger.'"—*E. Burritt.*

"Call not that man wretched who, whatever ills he suffers, has a child to love."—*Southey.*

"Of all sights which can soften and humanise the heart of man, there is none that ought so surely to reach it as that of innocent children enjoying the happiness which is their proper and natural portions."—*Southey.*

"I am fond of children. I think them the poetry of the world, the fresh flowers of our hearths and homes; little jurors, with their 'natural magic,' evoking by their spells what delights and enriches all ranks and equalises the different classes of society. Often as they bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think if there was never anything anywhere to be seen but great grown-up men and women! How we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delegated prophet, the harbinger and herald of good tidings, whose office it is 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and to draw 'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.' A child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence; it enriches the soul by new feelings, and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. It is a beam of light, a fountain of love, a teacher whose lessons few can resist. Infants recall us from much that engenders and encourages selfishness, that freezes the affections, roughens the manners, indurates the heart: they brighten the home, deepen love, invigorate exertion, infuse courage, and vivify and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, I do think, if it was not embellished by little children."—*Binney.*

"Unless you court the privacy of the



domestic circle, you will find that you are losing that intimate acquaintance with those who compose it, which is its chief charm and the source of all its advantage. In your family alone can there be that intercourse of heart with heart which falls like refreshing dew on the soul, when it is withered and parched by the heats of business and the intense selfishness which you must hourly meet in public life. Unless your affections are sheltered in that sanctuary, they cannot long resist the blighting influence of a constant repression of their development, and a compulsory substitution of calculation in their stead. Domestic privacy is necessary, not only to your happiness, but even to your efficiency; it gives the rest necessary to your active powers of judgment and discrimination; it keeps unclosed those well-springs of the heart whose flow is necessary to float onwards the determination of the head. It is not enough that the indulgence of these affections should fill up the casual chinks of your time; they must have their allotted portion of it, with which nothing but urgent necessity should be allowed to interfere.”—*W. C. Taylor*.

Vers. 10, 11. Moses here beautifully recalls to the nation's mind memories of the past, in which mercies received at the hand of God are very prominent. To this is added a prayer that the future may be as the past, but fuller. In connection with this subject are two thoughts, more or less impressive to various hearers, according to the experience of their lives.

I. Man stands in a continued relation to the past. No moment in the present or future can ever be wholly separated from the past. The feelings indulged in and sentiments expressed yesterday will influence life through all after years. A heart is more closely attached to you or deliberately alienated. Your whole after career will be more or less influenced by that one act.

It is highly necessary, while by each present we are making our past which is so to influence our future, that we consider this. The past becomes a man's life. The present very often is

nothing. It is but the dividing line between that just done and what we are about to do. The past stretches through long years. From it comes all a man's knowledge, feeling, experience. It is his life; we would almost say *himself*. He was made by that past.

II. The past gives form to the hopes and aspirations of the future.

“It is necessary to look forward as well as backward, as some think it always necessary to regulate their conduct by things that have been done of old times; but that past which is so presumptuously brought forward as a precedent for the present, was itself founded on an alteration of some past that went before it.”—*Madame de Staël*.

“As the pleasures of the future will be spiritual and pure, the object of a good and wise man in this transitory state of existence should be to fit himself for a better by controlling the unworthy propensities of his nature and improving all his better aspirations, to do his duty, first to God, then to his neighbour; to promote the happiness and welfare of those who are dependent upon him, or whom he has the means of assisting; never wantonly to injure the meanest thing that lives; to encourage, as far as he may have the power, whatever is useful and tends to refine and exalt humanity; to store his mind with such knowledge as it is fitted to receive and he is able to attain; and so to employ the talents committed to his care that, when the account is required, he may hope to have the stewardship approved.”—*Southey*.

On the knowledge of the past we reason for the future. From the past comes experience. Experience tells what is good. That a wise man desires.

Ver. 12. Moses found the work too much for himself alone, he therefore sought assistance. This is but a local application of the principle laid down in Genesis: “It is not good that man should be alone.” Man for the most part needs help, sympathy, and encouragement in his work. A few proud natures wander lion-like, alone through

the world; but their life is hard, unnatural, solitary. "The solitary," God has taken and "set in families."

"Hear your complaints, remedy your grievances, determine your controversies."—*Clapham*.

Ver. 12. "How can I bear you alone?" The anguish cry of the fathers has provided language for the children. The sufferings of one age have provided the vehicle of expression for the sufferings of the next. Thus Moses in this moment of trial has done a service for after-ages. Two lessons—

I. The most honoured men are put into situations of extreme difficulty and suffering.

II. Great faith has great trials.

"Examination and trial of a good scholar hurts him not, either in his learning or in his credit; nay, it advanceth him much in both; his very examination rubs up his learning, puts much upon him, and sends him away with the approbation of others. And thus in the trial of faith there is an exercise of faith; faith examined and tried prove a faith strengthened and increased. Some things sometimes prove the worse, and suffer loss by trial; but the more faith is tried the more faith is enlarged."—*Things New and Old*.

Ver. 12. "How can I bear you alone?" The interrogative form of statement is sometimes the most emphatic mode of statement. Moses does not distinctly state that he was severely tried. But his words imply that much. The words of Moses are echoed by a million hearts, who are crying, How shall I bear *this* burden, *this* circumstance, *this* strife, *this* loss, *this* sorrow?

I. Trial is the heritage of every life.

"Trials *must* and will befall."

All would gladly flee them. It is impossible. The necessity of life, and still more of growth in spiritual life, is trial.

II. Distinguish between *trial* and the effect of transgression. They may both be forms of suffering; indeed, the same form. They may tend to have the same effect upon our spirit, "of life

unto life or death unto death;" but there is this vital difference—the one can be escaped, avoided; the other cannot. A man can avoid losing his friend by his own temper: he cannot at all times restrain the whim and temper of his friend, which also rob him of hallowed friendship. Trials come from without: the effects of our transgressions from within. By care, grace, self-restraint, many of the so-called trials of life might be lessened, for the majority are only the effects of transgression of some kind, and rest entirely with ourselves.

III. Though there may be real trials from without which we cannot avert, and though much of the suffering which we endure might be averted, and the causes lie in ourselves, still the whole may be cheerfully met, and received as a discipline at the hand of God; for suffering of all kind, no matter whence the cause, if permitted to have the right effect, tends to chasten and purify the spirit.

IV. In trials of all kinds, whether they come through the body in the guise of pain, or whether they directly attack the emotions dressed as anguish, the most efficacious way of dealing with them is a humble and prayerful committal of ourselves to the care and providence of God.

V. Prayer for help, trust in God, the hope of either removal or supporting grace according to the trial, is the true way to commit ourselves to God. To fret only wears out. Complaint embitters. Resignation to the Divine will, memories of brighter pasts, hopes of happier futures, enweave around the storms of life a halo of light and glory given by the Sun of Righteousness, Himself shining from where we cannot see Him.

Ver. 13. "Bring ye unto me wise and understanding men, and esteemed throughout your tribes."—*Delgado*.

"Known among their tribes." Their several tribes were to approve of them and to vouch for their character. These were in this respect a sort of figure of the College of Bishops, of whose ordina-

Hon. St. Cyprian tells us, such care was and ought to be taken, that it was a great irregularity and omission in their ordination if the neighbouring Bishops of the province did not come together to the people of the diocese over which the Bishop to be ordained was to preside, and if he was not elected in the presence of the people, as who should be perfectly well acquainted with his whole life and conversation (Ep. lxvii. 172). See Origen, Comm. on Lev. viii. 5, quoted in *Bib. Bib.*

In Deut. i. 9-13, Moses is represented as having proposed the appointment of these judges to the people himself, which, it is said in the text, was suggested and proposed to him by his father-in-law, Jethro—a circumstance which has been considered as involving a considerable difficulty. One would almost think that the way in which we have stated the fact was in itself enough to show that there is in reality no discrepancy between the two passages; but to avoid all misconception of the matter, we transcribe the following from Dr. Greaves:—

“There is a great and striking difference between those statements, but there is no contradiction. Jethro suggested to Moses the appointment; he probably, after consulting God, as Jethro intimates, ‘If God shall thus command thee’ (ver. 23), referred the whole matter to the people, and assigned the choice of individuals to them. The persons thus selected he admitted to share his authority as subordinate judges. Thus the two statements are perfectly consistent. But this is not all: their difference is most natural. In first recording the event, it was natural Moses should dwell on the first cause which led to it, and pass by the appeal to the people as a subordinate and less material part of the transaction; but in addressing the people, it was natural to notice the part they themselves had in the selection of those judges, in order to conciliate their regard and obedience. How naturally, also, does the pious legislator, in his public address, dwell on every circumstance which could improve

his hearers in piety and virtue! The multitude of the people was the cause of the appointment of the judges; how beautifully is this increase of the nation turned to an argument of gratitude to God! How affectionate is the blessing with which the pious speaker interrupts the narrative, imploring God that the multitude of the people may increase a thousandfold! How admirably does he take occasion, from mentioning the judges, to inculcate the eternal principles of justice and piety, which should control their decisions! How remote is all this from art, forgery, and imposture! Surely here, if anywhere, we can trace the dictates of nature, truth, and piety.”—*Carpenter, An Examination of Scrip. Diff.*

“Wise men.” “Rulers’ actions exemplary. If the mountains overflow with water, the valleys are the better; and if the head be full of ill humours, the whole body fares the worse. The actions of rulers are most commonly rules for the people’s actions, and their example passeth as current as their coin. If a peasant meet luxury in a scarlet robe, he dares be such, having so fair a cloak for it. The common people are like tempered wax, easily receiving impressions from the seals of great men’s vices; they care not to sin by prescription, and damn themselves with authority. And it is the unhappy privilege of greatness to warrant by example as well others’ as its own sins; whilst the unadvised vulgar take up crimes on trust and perish by credit.”—*Things New and Old.*

“Known.” “Public men must have public spirit. Plutarch records an excellent speech of Pelopidas when going out of his house to the wars; his wife came to take her leave of him, and with tears in her eyes prays him to look to himself. ‘O my good wife!’ said he, ‘it is for private soldiers to be careful of themselves, not for those in public place; they must have an eye to save other men’s lives.’ Such a spirit becomes every man in public place; flesh and blood will be apt to prompt a man that it is good to sleep in a whole skin: why should a man hazard himself and bring himself



into danger? But let such know that men in public places are to have public spirits, and to take notice that though there be more danger by standing in the gap than getting behind the hedge, yet it is best to be where God looks for them to be."—*Things New and Old*.

"Get you wise men," &c. Moses was not unwilling to share his honours with others. He is an old man. Much of the ambition of youth is dying out. The pressure of anxiety and care is great. With the justice characteristic of his noble nature he did not ask men to share his labours without sharing his honours. A few homiletical points are—

I. No unworthy or selfish ambition to be cherished. Share your honour with those who divide with you your care and toil. How different would many a wife's life have been had all husbands been governed by this principle! Both the rich and the poor daily give us examples. Too many arise like him of whom Milton says—

"One shall rise  
Of proud ambitious heart, who, not content  
With fair equality, fraternal state,  
Will arrogate dominion undeserved  
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess  
Concord and law of nature from the earth."

II. Contrast with this picture the action of Moses. No merely nominal superiority to be coveted. Position may be had sometimes by theft. Thrones are sometimes stolen as well as trinkets from a lady's table. Place is sometimes gained by flattery. But what is such nominal superiority? True position is *power*.

"The true ambition there alone resides  
Where justice vindicates and wisdom guides,  
Where inward dignity joins outward state,  
Our purpose good, as our achievement great;  
Where public blessings public praise attend,  
Where glory is our motive and our end:  
Would'st thou be famed? Have those high  
acts in view  
Brave men would act though scandal would  
ensue." —*Young*.

Position of every kind is always a tacit acknowledgment of willingness for service, for the possessor of place is ever proclaiming his power to work. And as soon as a man cannot work it is

his duty to retire from office. Moses shows his true manhood in his act. He spurned *nominal* superiority. He preferred abdication, which his act virtually is, to holding of the reins of steeds of which he no longer had control.

III. The most actively fraternal spirit to be cultivated. Sir Walter Scott ably and earnestly advocated this principle when he said, "The race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other. From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid have a right to ask it from their fellow-mortals; no one who holds the power of granting can refuse it without guilt."

"A happy bit hame this auld world would be  
If men when they're here could mak' shift  
to agree,  
An' ilk said to his neighbour, in cottage  
an' ha',  
'Come, gi'e me your hand—we be brethren a'.  
I ken na why ane wi' anither should fight,  
When to 'gree would make a' body cosie  
an' right;  
When man meets wi' man, 'tis the best way  
ava  
To say, 'Gi'e me your hand—we are brethren a'."  
—*Robert Nicol*.

IV. This spirit easily cultivated by those who walk with God as Moses did. The secret of every truly great life lies in that fact, "He walked with God." Enoch needed not to see death, for he walked with God. Those who walk with God have God dwelling in them." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). "Secret things belong unto the Lord," said the author of Deuteronomy; to which the Psalmist is able to add, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." God lights that subtle fire in the heart of the believer by the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that all the dross of evil is consumed away and the pure gold of Being alone left. Moses was one of those long in the furnace of affliction. And beautiful

was he when the snows of a hundred and twenty winters whitened his head. By the same process, by the same spirit, by the same cultivation, may men to-day become as the man Moses was some five and thirty centuries ago.

*Ambition proves its own ruin.* "The poisonous aconite, so much desired of the panther, is purposely hung up by the hunters in vessels above their reach, whereof they are so greedy, that they never leave leaping and straining thereat till they burst and kill themselves, and so are taken. Thus do men aim at honour and greatness too high for their reach, and too great oftentimes for their merit; for an ambitious heart overgrown with this rank aconite neither admits of the beams of grace to mollify its hardness nor the bounds of nature to restrain the swelling; but is unnaturally carried to wrong those of his own blood that are living, and to blemish the honourable fame of his predecessors that are departed. Such tyrants may bear themselves up for a time, but in the end they shall find that, though Divine justice hath leaden feet, she hath iron hands; though slow in coming, yet she strikes home."—*Sir R. Dallington.*

*The poisonous nature of ambition.* "As poison is of such force that it corrupteth both blood and spirit, besieging, seizing, and infecting the heart with venomous contagion thereof, quite altering the complexion and condition of the man that hath drunk it, so the pestiferous desire of sovereignty, though it seize on a mind of mild and mansuet disposition, yet it is of such forcible operation, as it not only altereth man's nature, but maketh man unnatural."—*Sir R. Dallington.*

Ver. 15. Cf. "Critical Notes."

"Chief of your tribes." "They were the fitter for this high employment because men of quality. They were less liable to be corrupted by bribery, from which Moses took such care that all judges should be so free that he expressly required they should be men *hating* covetousness (Exod. xviii. 21)." —*Bibliotheca Biblica.*

In the oath administered to judges, Solon put in a special clause to prevent bribery, which is quoted in Demosthenes' oration against Timocrates. "I will receive no gift upon the account of my sentence: neither I myself, nor anybody else for me; nor another with my knowledge, by any artifice or devise whatsoever."—*Vide Patrick on Pass.*

"Officers." שְׁטָרִים, *Shotérím*, cf. "Biblical Treasury," vol. i. p. 158, a long note found in Michaelis on *Shotérím*.

*Shotérím*, one set over a thing, an overseer, arranger, administrator, mentioned with judges, Deut. xvi. 18, with elders, Deut. xxxi. 28, with elders and judges, Jos. viii. 33, with elders, judges, and heads, Jos. xxiii. 2, with guide and ruler, Prov. vi. 7. They were chosen from people, Num. xi. 16. They had to make commands known to the people, Jos. i. 10. To conduct the levies of soldiers, Deut. xx. 5. They were officers in cities, 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, xxvi. 29; sometimes filled higher dignities, 2 Chron. xxvi. 11. They also regulated affairs in the camp, Josh. viii. 33. The translation γραμματῆς, scribe, LXX. *sofro*, Syr., does not suit.—*Fürst's Lex.*

"Wise men and known"—in other words, true men. Two kinds of men in the world. Men of the world—imitations of the true thing, counterfeits of immortality; and true men—men full of the spirit of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 4, iv. 8, vi. 3, vii. 55, xi. 24, &c.—known men—men known of God and man; known of God because of the truth of their life; known of men because of the power of their life—men of Christ.

I. *Men of the world.* These follow the course of expediency. They adopt a corrupt worldly religion. Their God is a golden calf. They worship prosperity, know only what is seen, drop the unfortunate, are entirely ignorant of the religious principles taught by James (cf. James i. 27). Widows, poor, afflicted, unfortunate, too troublesome, too expensive.

II. *Men of Christ.* What a contrast these men present! As different as Hezekiah and Manasseh. These true men of Christ have distinctive principles

in their life. Conduct governed by the law of their Master (Matt. v. 44; John xv. 12; Luke vi. 31).

(a.) These men will eventually succeed (1 Sam. ii. 30).

(b.) These men always strong (Jer. l. 34; Matt. xxviii. 20).

(c.) Though such have their season of gloom, a light yet arises on their path.

"Sometimes a light surprises  
The Christian while he sings:  
It is the Lord, who rises  
With healing in His wings."

—Cowper.

*Magistrates to be men of understanding.* Heraclitus being sick, examined his physician concerning the cause of his sickness; but finding that he was ignorant thereof, he would take none of his physic, saying, "If he be not able to show me the cause, he is less able to take away the cause of my disease." Thus there are many sores and sicknesses in a commonwealth, a thousand ways of cheating. The generality of men is, as Ovid said of Autolycus, "furtum ingeniosus ad omne," witty in all kinds of wickedness; indeed the world is set upon wickedness (1 John v. 19). And such is the subtilty, too, of offenders, that the trim tale of Tertullus (Acts xxiv.) goes current till the Apostle comes after him and unstarches it. How easy is a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand, —a bad cause smoothed over with goodly pretences! So cunning, so wary, and so wise are the many, that, as Cæsar said of the Scythians, it is harder to find them than to foil them; like the cuttlefish, they can hide themselves in their own ink-floods, they cover themselves with their own devices. The magistrate, that physician of the body politic, had need of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that he may keep that one ear open for the innocent, whether plaintiff or defendant: he must be a man of experience, industry, and judgment to catch all the guilty with the hook of justice, who are crafty and slippery to avoid them, that he may be able to put away the very causes of corruption.

*Magistrates must be examples.* It is said in the praise of Moses that he

was a mighty man both in word and deed (Acts vii. 22); not mighty in word only, as many governors are, to command strongly, but mighty also in deed, to do it accordingly. As Tully reports of Julius Cæsar that he was never heard saying to his soldiers *Ite illuc*, "Go ye thither," as if they should go into service and he stay behind in the tent; but *Venite huc*, "Come hither; let us give the onset, and adventure our lives together;" a great encouragement for the soldier to follow when he sees his captain march before! Thus it is that if the magistrate will persuade the people to anything, he must show the experience of it first in himself; or if he will command the people anything, he must do it first himself and by himself; otherwise, if he exact one thing, and do another, it will be said that he is like a waterman, who rows one way and looks another. (Cf. Sermon preached 1622, before Prince Charles at St. James's.)

"*Made them heads.*" "A good magistrate or minister is the support of the place where he lives. Men use to fence and defend, to keep watch and ward over their cornfields whilst the corn and fruit are in them unreaped, ungathered; but when the corn is in and safe in the barn, then is open-tide, as they say; they lay all open, throw in the fence, and let in beasts of all kind; nay, sometimes they set fire on the stubble. Thus every zealous magistrate, every godly minister, every good Christian is, as it were, a fence, a hedge to that place, that parish where they live; and when they are once plucked up, when they are taken away by death, or otherwise removed, that kingdom, that place, that parish lies open to all manner of ruin and destruction."—*Things New and Old.*

Vers. 9–15. This appointment of the "captains" (cf. Exod. xviii. 21 sqq.) must not be confounded with that of the elders in Num. xi. 16 sqq. The former would number 78,600; the latter were seventy only. The time and place, and indeed the transactions themselves, were quite different. The



only common point between the two lies in the complaint of Moses, ver. 12, which bears some verbal resemblance to Num. xi. 14-17. But, as in both cases, the grievance Moses had was of the same kind, there is no reason why he should not express it in the like terms. It is, in fact, a characteristic of the speech of early times, and one exemplified in every ancient record, to employ the same or similar combinations of words for like occasions, instead of inventing new combinations for each. Such similarities afford no proof whatever of the writers having other like passages in view. Very ancient languages had not that variety and flexibility of expression which belongs to the modern languages of Western Europe.

"It has been observed that in Exodus the appointment of the captains is described as made before the giving of the law at Sinai; here it seems to be placed immediately before the people departed from Horeb, *i.e.*, a year later. But it is obvious that Moses is only touching on certain parts of the whole history, and with a special purpose. God had given them a promise, and willed them to enter on the enjoyment of it. Moses too had done his part, and had provided for the good government and organisation of their greatly increased multitude. All was ready for the full accomplishment of the promises before the camp broke up from Horeb. The order of statement is here rather suggested by the purposes of the speaker than by the facts. But it is nevertheless quite correct in the main point, which is that this important arrangement for the good government of the people took place before they quitted Horeb to march direct to the Promised Land. This fact sets more clearly before us the perverseness and ingratitude of the people, to which the orator next passes, and shows, what he was anxious to impress, that the fault of the forty years' delay rested only with themselves."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Ver. 16. A good charge. Those that are advanced to honour must know that they are charged with business, and

must give account another day of their charge.

I. He charges them to be *diligent and patient*. "Hear the causes." Hear both sides, here them fully, hear them carefully; for nature has provided us with two ears, and he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. The ear of the learner is necessary to the tongue of the learned (Isa. l. 4).

II. To be *just and impartial*. "Judge righteously." Judgment must be given according to the merits of the case, without regard to the qualities of the parties. The native must not be suffered to abuse the stranger, nor the great the small. No faces known in judgment.

III. To be *resolute and courageous*. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." Be not overawed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd or by the menaces of those possessing power.

IV. He gave a good reason to enforce this charge. "The judgment is God's." You act for God—act like Him. His representatives, if you judge unrighteously you misrepresent Him.—*M. Henry*.

*Cf.* Solon's oath. "I will hear the accuser and the defender both alike."—*Quoted by Patrick*.

Ver. 16. "As their person and endowments made them considerable, they were therefore designated with the honourable title Schofetim "(Shoph'tim)" and were also called Elders, a title of honour among the Jews and other nations."—*Patrick*.

*Cf.* Alderman = Elderman.

Vers. 15, 16. Subject: Organisation.

There is nothing clearer in history than that men stand in relation to one another of superior and inferior. That very fact necessitates gradations of position; all cannot be first, all cannot be last. The point to be determined is every man's faculty, and his adaptation for a particular sphere. The narrative before us provides us with the abstract

principle concentered into a tangible form. Moses—chiefs of tribes—captains—officers.

Society could not exist without organisation. Organisation would break up without leaders (*cf.* various epochs in history when society has been shattered for want of able leaders). Natural history as well as the history of humanity enforces this truth. The bee has its queen; a flock of sheep, a herd of deer their leader.

Three things about true leaders—

I. They must be chosen of God. Moses was thus appointed; so Joshua. These subordinate rulers were chosen by the same, though in a subordinate manner. Moses as God's vicegerent selected them from those who had God's stamp upon them—ability and acknowledged position. To him that has shall be given.

II. Being chosen by God, they must walk according to the Divine counsels. "The book of the law of the Lord shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous," &c. (Josh. i. 8). God never endows man with independence. He is raised high, but is ever subject to God. It was because Satan overlooked this, according to our great poet, that he fell from his high estate. However that may be, man quickly learns that he who lives without God soon finds that God can live without him.

III. In proportion as leaders acknowledge God, so He prospers them (*cf.* Josh. i. 8); "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." "They that honour Me will I honour."

Four thoughts on organisation—

I. Organisation facilitates the development of individual talent.

II. Organisation consolidates Christian society assembled in one place.

III. Organisation presents most formidable front to the enemy.

IV. Organisation promotes healthful spiritual development.—*Dr. Parker.*

"Judge righteously." It was a shame

for Cæsar to confess, "*Melior causa Cassii, sed denegare Bruto nihil possum*" (The case of Cassius was the better, but I am unable to deny Brutus anything); and Henry the Emperor (the seventh of that name) is much taxed in story for that, being appealed unto by a couple of lawyers, who contended about the sovereignty of the empire, they first making agreement betwixt themselves that he for whom the Emperor should give sentence should win a horse of his fellow-lawyer: now the Emperor fairly pronounced truth to be on his side that spake most for his power and authority, whereupon this proverb was taken up, "*Alter respondet æquum, sed alter habet equum*" (The one hath the right on his side, but the other rides the horse). Thus it is that partiality perverteth right and corrupteth judgment, whereas the law is plain. "You shall have no respect of person in judgment," &c. And the Apostle's charge unto Timothy is, that he do nothing *κατὰ πρόσωπον*, by tilting the balance on one side.

*Magistrates should be men of courage.*

"Elvidius Priscus, being commanded by Vespasian either not to come into the senate, or being there, to speak nothing but what he directed, made answer, that being a senator, it was fit he should go into the senate; and being there, it was his duty to speak in his conscience what he thought to be true; and then being threatened, if he did so, he should die, further added, "That he never as yet told him that he was immortal; and therefore," said he, "do what you will, I will do what I ought; and as it is in your power to put me unjustly to death, so it is in my power to die resolutely for the truth." Here now was a brave-spirited heathen, fit for Christian imitation; for he can never be a faithful man that is afraid to speak his mind. Men of public employment for the people's good must and ought to stand up for the truth, to be men of courage, men of resolution, not fearing the frown of any whatsoever; not echoing out the dictates of others, but freely speaking their own thoughts without any fear at all."—*Things New and Old.*

*Magistrates to be impartial in justice.* Selucus, that impartial lawgiver of the Locrians, made a law against adulterers, that whosoever should be found guilty thereof should have his eyes put out. It so happened that his son proved the first offender. Sentence was pronounced, execution ready to be done; whereupon the people earnestly entreated the judge his father that he would pardon the fact, who, upon serious deliberation, put out one of his own eyes and one of his son's, and so showed himself a godly father and an upright judge together. Thus it is that magistrates, like the earth, should be immovable, though the winds should blow at once from all points of the compass; not to favour friends, nor fear the frowns of enemies, but to proceed impartially according to the merits of the cause that is before them (Prov. xviii. 5).

**Ver. 17. Duty of magistrates.** Part of Moses's solemn charge to the judges of Israel. Jehoshaphat in substance said the same (*cf.* 2 Chron. xix. 6). Charge was necessary then—now—as long as men are subject to weakness, negligence, corruption, or passion. The words imply—

I. The judgment is God's.

II. Ye shall not fear man.

III. The subject may see the sin and danger of opposing, disobeying, and vilifying magistrates.—*T. Wilson.*

**Ver. 17. The authority of magistrates.** "For the judgment is God's." Moses here enforces the charge given to the judges of Israel. He repeats (*cf.* Lev. xix. 15) it to procure reverence for the judges, and to encourage the judges to be fearless. Moses had done as much as he was able to procure the faithful execution of so high a trust: he "took the chief of the tribes, wise men" (*cf.* ver. 15). To the natural character of the men he adds the support of a good reason why they should do what was right: "The judgment is God's." First they derive authority from Him, the fountain of power (*cf.* Prov. viii. 15); secondly, they judge in His cause, and

assert the honour of Him that loveth righteousness" (*cf.* Ps. xi. 7). Work of righteous judgment—dividing between good and evil, subduing the violent, detecting villainy, punishing the guilty, shielding the innocent, restraining the vindictive, protesting against all flattery. Considering that the judgment is God's, it becomes imperative that we do right. Two lines of thought—

I. What regard is due to the person that judges for God.

II. What obligations are laid upon him.

**Ver. 17. Those who act for God as His vicegerents must act like Him.** He will protect them in doing right, and call them to account if they do wrong.—*Tract Soc. Com.*

"Be not afraid of any man."—*Delgado.*

"He shall not respect persons." "Not look to the face," &c. *Cf. Crit. Notes.* *Cf.* also the ancient custom of painting and sculpturing Justice with her eyes veiled.—*Bib. Bib.*

The Thebans painted their magistrates without hands, and the chief of them without eyes, to put them in mind that they were not in any degree to be swayed by favour or bribe.—*Bib. Bib.*

*Cf.* Homer's description of Ulysses, Od. 4.

"Ulysses let no partial favours fall;  
The people's parent, he protected all."  
—*Pope's Homer.*

"Ye shall hear small as well as great," "Be equally disposed patiently to attend to the cause of a poor man as of a great, and to do him as speedily and impartial justice. (See Lev. xix. 15.) And here the Hebrew doctors tell us of some singular practices in their courts to preserve the dispensation of exact justice; for if one of the contending parties came into them richly clothed and the other poorly, they would not hear him till both were clothed alike. Nor would they suffer one of them to sit and the other to stand, but both of them either sat or stood. And if they sat, one of them was not permitted to sit higher than the other, but they sat by each other's side."—*Patrick.*



"Courage and undaunted resolution are altogether necessary qualities for a judge."—*Patrick*.

Ver. 17. In this verse, in a most undisguised manner, we have most emphatically enforced a social virtue—justice. God never taught that religion might be divorced from morality. When Moses spake *thus*: when the author of the Proverbs says—"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord:" Isaiah—"Thus saith the Lord, Keep judgment and do justice, for My salvation is near to come and My righteousness to be revealed:" Amos—"Let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream:" Jeremiah—"He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him: was not this to know Me? saith the Lord" (*cf.* the endorsement of Jesus across these passages, Matt. v. 17-20): Paul—(Rom. ii. 13; Phil. iv. 8; Col. iv. 1; Rom. vi. 1): and James—"Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, . . . to keep one's self unspotted from the world," &c. &c., to chap. ii. 10: we have, from Moses to James, divinely inspired men proclaiming there is no divorce between religion and morality; and to the man who pretends to a religious life while he ignores moral and social duties let there be but the one word—"What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

In the fulness of this verse we have the various steps of injustice referred to; and placed in startling juxtaposition is a fact that should be as a barrier to obstruct all such evil courses. Let us observe—

I. That the first step towards evil is a playing with it in our own mind. The inspired penman knew what he was saying when he warned against "*respecting*." What is admired is loved—is imitated. The mind silently is brought into harmony with it. What was it the young man did whose later life was marked with some of the most terrible vices of manhood? It was so simple a thing as yielding to impure thought—permitting unchaste images to take a lodgment in his fancy. How was it that the young woman whose life was

darkened with scenes no woman should have beheld took the first step? Was it not by respecting certain friends whom she ought not to have respected? The voice of the charmer should have been recognised. In her own thoughts she cherished him.

II. We cannot indulge in the thought without its becoming incarnate in some form, which is action. Moses knew that men could not rest content with simply respecting. If the great were respected the small would be ignored: indeed, not only would the small be ignored, there was a danger of their being silenced in their pleadings, and justice, which was their right, being taken from them. In like manner we cannot afford for a moment to think evil of God. If we give place to such a thought, the mind takes an attitude which soon becomes open rebellion.

III. We cannot play with evil without enervating our moral nature. The man who respects the great and ignores his duties to the small loses the "fear of God," and in its place enthrones the fear of man. "Ye shall not stand in awe of the face of man."

IV. The barrier that God would raise up around every man to restrain his feet from wandering is the *fact* of His presence—His sovereignty: "The judgment is God's." The most impressive comment that can be offered here is what was spoken to Saul on the way to Damascus: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Ver. 17. This is part of a *solemn charge* which Moses gave to the judges of Israel. The same in effect did Jehoshaphat give to his judges (2 Chron. xix. 6). If such was necessary then, it is *now*, and will be as long as men shall be as they now are—subject to weakness, negligence, corruption, passion. The words of the text suppose this. The words, though few, imply much instruction.

I. "The judgment is God's." Why, then, the magistrate's power and authority is from God.

II. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." This teaches the magistrate

his duty, &c., that he is not to pervert justice for any worldly consideration; no, not for the fear of death.

III. The subject may here see the sin and danger of opposing, of disobeying, of vilifying the magistrate in the due execution of his office. He is God's minister; his judgment, if just, is the very judgment of God; God is with him in judgment, and will certainly avenge him if he is despised.—*T. Wilson's Sermons.*

Ver. 17. "The judgment is God's."

In these words Moses enforces that solemn charge which he gave to the judges. He repeats it to procure veneration for their *character*, to remind them of their own *dignity*, to raise them above the power of *fear*, *prejudice*, and *interest*. Here was a forcible reason for faithfulness in executing their high trust. Their authority was from God; the work was God's. It concerns the judge to know whose authority he has that he may be *righteous*; it concerns the people that they may be *obedient*. I shall therefore show—

I. What regard is due to the persons that judge for God.

(a.) They are to be treated with tender regard.

(b.) The nature of their office requires more than ordinary veneration; for unless we preserve a just notion of the sacred authority that is vested in the ministers of judgment, they will scarcely be a terror to evil-doers—they will bear the sword in vain.

(c.) For the sake of those in public station we should endeavour to suppress all pernicious principles.

II. What obligations are laid upon them.

(a.) No sordid hopes of advantage, no fear, partiality, or pity, must be allowed to pervert.

(b.) "Let no man despise you." You must retain a just value of yourselves and support your character.

(c.) Judges must check vice.

(d.) Justice and mercy should go hand in hand.—*T. Newlin.*

Vers. 16, 17. "I charged," &c. The parts of this charge are—

I. Patience to hear causes.

II. Justice in judging righteously (John vii. 24).

III. Courage (Lev. xix. 15; Deut. xvi. 19; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Prov. xiv. 23).

IV. Prudence. The cause too hard you bring to me.—*Kidder.*

Vers. 16, 17. Subject: Not to abuse entrusted power. All power is entrusted. Though men apparently make their own position in the world, yet what they acquire is in accordance with ability given by God. We have many cases of abused power. Achan is an instance. He had the power of serving God by destroying what he found. He kept it. Power abused. Herod is another instance of one who abused power.

I. Power may be abused by not using it at all. Cf. Saul with Agag.

II. Power may be abused by using it in a wrong direction. Herod (cf. Matt. xiv. 1-13). Here is an example of power used in a wrong direction.

(a.) It injured his own moral nature.

(b.) It encouraged others to wrong.

(c.) It brought injury to the upright.

In warning the judges against the abuse of power, Moses thought of all this and much more.

Ver. 19. "That great and terrible wilderness" (cf. viii. 15). This language is by no means applicable to the whole peninsula of Sinai, even in its present deteriorated state. It is, however, quite such as men would employ after having passed with toil and suffering through the worst parts of it, the southern half of the Arabah; and more especially when they had but recently rested from their marches in the plain of Shittim, the largest and richest oasis in the whole district.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

"The Divine blessing has not bestowed the same degree of fruitfulness on every part of Canaan. This fertile country is surrounded by deserts of immense extent, exhibiting a dreary waste of loose and barren sand, on which the skill and industry of man are able to make no impression. The only vegetable production which occasionally meets the

eye of the traveller in these frightful solitudes are a coarse sickly grass thinly sprinkled on the sand, a plot of senna or other saline or bitter herb, or an occasional acacia bush. Even these but rarely present themselves to his notice, and afford him but little satisfaction when they do, because they warn him that he is far distant from a place of abundance and repose. Moses, who knew these deserts well, calls them 'great' and 'terrible,' 'a desert land,' the 'waste howling wilderness.' But the completest picture of the sandy desert is drawn by the pencil of Jeremiah, in which, with surprising force and beauty, he has exhibited every circumstance of terror which the modern traveller details with so much pathos and minuteness—'Neither say they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of droughts and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passeth through, and where no man dwelt.'—*Paxton*.

"That great and terrible wilderness." To those familiar with the reality of which the seen and temporal are but shadows, these words are very suggestive of another desert, and the way by which God's people travel through it. Souls are born in a spiritual Egypt. Life is a kind of desert wandering of trial, "great," "terrible" at times. But there *is* a way through it; for unto the redeemed One has said in the heart's mystic silence, "I am the Way:" "Lo! I am with you."

#### I. The way of the redeemed.

- (1.) Long.
- (2.) Difficult.
- (3.) Sometimes apparently lonely.
- (4.) A desert way.

#### II. The rectitude of that way. It is a right way, for

- (1.) It is the Divine way. God led them along it by a cloud and fire.
- (2.) It is the way to the promised reward.

*Salt deserts.* In traversing the region between Egypt and Ghuzzeh, the Gaza of the Bible, my course, during most of the forenoon, lay through a suc-

cession of basins or valleys, where the surface of the ground was moist, and covered with a thin incrustation of salt. It was so slippery here that the camels could with difficulty keep erect; one of them actually fell at full length with a groan which it was piteous to hear. We were not far at this time from the Mediterranean, of which we had glimpses now and then. It is quite possible that a strong wind from the west causes the sea occasionally to overflow the entire tract, and on its receding, the water left in the low places evaporates and encrusts the earth with salt. There are other deserts, or parts of deserts, in the East, as travellers inform us, which present a similar peculiarity, though the salt may be formed, in those cases, in a different manner. Perhaps the most remarkable among these is the region south of the Dead Sea. A soil of this nature must, of course, be unproductive. Nothing grows there, and the means of supporting life are wanting. It may be to this feature of an Eastern desert, aggravating so much its other evils, and rendering it unfit to be the abode of men, that the prophet Jeremiah refers when he says of the ungodly man, "He shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."—*Professor Hackett*.

*The deserts.* "Few who have not visited Eastern lands can form any adequate idea of the nature of a desert. In those wide-spread plains the hand of man is powerless. Nature holds sway as on the morning of creation; in primeval wildness she displays her terrors and her magnificence, and art and science sink down helpless and appalled before the barriers which she has erected. As the traveller recedes from the habitation of man, and the tokens of civilisation begin to disappear, the scene becomes wilder and more desolate; a few stunted patches of parched and scanty herbage here and there meet the eye; vast blocks of stone are scattered over the sand; no cooling streams, no refreshing groves, break the monotony of the prospect; the sun pours down a flood of burning and dazzling light, and the distant mountains glow in the hot



and dusky horizon. The strength of man seems to melt away within him, and the camel, 'the ship of the desert,' paces onward with languid step. By night the piercing winds are scarcely less endurable than the heat by day. The mountainous portions of the desert afford some of the most awfully sublime scenery that the world can exhibit; and here the terrors of the plains are mitigated by shade and water. Such was the wilderness where the children of Israel wandered for forty years."—*H. Christmas.*

Ver. 21. The journeyings of the Israelites in the wilderness afford an inexhaustible fund of instruction to us. The history of their deliverance from Egypt, their trials and supports, and their final entrance into the land of Canaan, so exactly corresponds with the experience of believers in their journey heavenward, that we are never at a loss for an illustration of that which is invisible from that which actually took place amongst God's ancient people.

The Israelites, after one year spent in the wilderness, were now arrived on the very confines of Canaan, and the exhortation which I have now read to you was part of the address of Moses to them encouraging them to go up and take possession of the land. And assuming (what I need not now stand to prove) the justness of the parallel between their state and ours, the words before us contain—

I. The command given us in reference to the Promised Land. There is for us, as there was for Israel, "a rest" prepared (Heb. iv. 8, 9), and we are bidden to take possession of it.

(1.) By right, as the gift of God.

[Canaan was given to Abraham and his seed by God Himself. God had a right to give it to whom He would. The former possessors were but tenants at will; if God saw fit to dispossess them, no wrong done them. This is said to satisfy the mind of those who feel repugnance to the transfer of the land from the Canaanites to Israel.

In relation to the land *we* are called to possess no such feeling can exist. Heaven is the free gift of God to Abraham's *spiritual* seed, as Canaan was to the *natural*. It is given to them in Christ Jesus (Tit. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 9).

This command do we give, in the name of Almighty God, to every one of you who believe in Christ, "Go up and possess the land," which the Sovereign of the universe, of His own love and mercy, has given to you.]

(2.) By conflict, as the fruit of victory.

[Though the land was given to them, they were yet to gain it by the sword. We also have enemies to fight. The world, the flesh, and the devil obstruct. All must be vanquished before we can sit down to the promised inheritance. Nor let it be thought that heaven is less a gift on this account; for though we fight, it is not our own sword that gets us the victory. It was "God Himself who drove out the inhabitants" of the earthly Canaan, and it is through God alone that our weapons produce any effect in subduing our enemies before us (*cf.* John vi. 27; Ps. cxv. 1).]

Together with this command we are taught—

II. The way in which we should address ourselves to the performance of it. The command of God to us is positive, as that to them also was; and

(1.) Our obedience to Him should be prompt.

[I am persuaded they would have done well if they had never thought of sending spies to search out the land, and to tell them against what cities they should direct their first efforts. It was a carnal expedient, as the event proved. True, "Moses was well pleased" with the proposal; but he would not have been well pleased if he had clearly seen from whence it issued and what would be the result of it. He saw in it only a determination to go up; he discerned not the mixture of unbelief. What need had they to search when God had searched and was about to lead them? (*cf.* ver. 33). Had they said to Moses, 'Pray to God for us to direct us, and we are ready to go,' they would have done well; but, by trusting to an arm of flesh they fell.

In like manner we should obey the Divine mandate without delay. We should "not confer with flesh and blood;" we should not be consulting how we may avoid the trials which God has taught us to expect; but should look simply to the Captain of our salvation, and follow implicitly His commands, regarding no word in comparison of His, nor ever dreaming of a more convenient season than the present. What He calls us to do we should "do" instantly, and "with all our might."]

(2.) Our confidence in Him should be entire.

[They were bidden "not to fear or be discouraged." So neither should we "fear" any dangers that may threaten us, or "be discouraged" under any trial we may be called to endure. As for "Anakims" or

cities "walled up to heaven," what are they to us? Is not "He greater than is in us than any that can be in them"? If Jehovah be on our side, what have we to fear? We may say of all our enemies, as Joshua did of those he was called to encounter, "They are bread for us;" and shall not only be devoured as easily as a morsel of bread, but they and all that they have shall be our very support, invigorating our souls by the energies they call forth, and augmenting the happiness which they labour to destroy. Whatever may occur, we should never stagger at the promise through unbelief, but "be strong in faith, giving glory to God." We should go forward in the spirit of the holy Apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

III. Hear then, believers, and follow my advice.

(1.) Survey the land.

[See whether it be not *the glory of all lands*, "a land flowing with milk and honey." "Come up to Pisgah, and look down upon it." I would rather say, Come up to Zion, and behold its length and breadth. See it. Taste its fruits. Take in your hand "the grapes of Eshecol." "Not one of its inhabitants ever says, I am sick." "No sorrow there, no sighing, no pain, no death" (cf. Isa. xxxiii. 24; Rev. xxi. 4, 23; Rom. viii. 18). Tell me, is it not worth the conflict? Only keep that glorious object in view, and you will never sheath your sword till you have gained the victory.]

(2.) Perform your duty.

[Gird on your swords. Go forward against the enemy. Make no account of any obstacles. Think neither of the strength nor the number of your enemies. Say not, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty," &c., &c. (Isa. xlix. 24, 25). Be not discouraged by a sense of your own weakness. Go on simply depending upon God (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Isa. xii. 10). With confidence do I address you thus; for the Lord Jesus Himself has said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Only "fight the good fight of faith," and you shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved you."]—*Simeon* (Abridged).

Ver. 21. In this verse we have a mind at home with God opening itself to the gaze of the world. What simple trust—reverent faith—holy dependence sparkle in the words! Among the many suggestions of this verse, let us notice—

I. That it indicates the bent of a good man's mind. It is Godwards. God is in all his thoughts. The *arrangement* of life is of God: the past full of God: the present is blessed by

Him: the future swayed by Him. Three characteristics of the good man—

(1.) He is of an earnest spirit.

(2.) He is humble.

(3.) He is devout.

II. It delineates the power of a good man's faith.

(1.) *His confidence*. "The Lord thy God hath set the land before thee," &c. "Nothing but innocence and knowledge can give sound confidence to the heart."—*Bishop Hall*. "Confidence in one's self is the best nurse of magnanimity."—*Sir Philip Sidney*.

(2.) *His perseverance*. "Go up and possess." "*Persevere* is applied only to matters of some importance which demand a steady purpose of the mind; *persist* is used in respect to the ordinary business of life, as well as on more important occasions. A learner *perseveres* in his studies: a child may *persist* in making a request until he has obtained the object of his desires."—*Crabb*, *Synonyms*.

"Great effects come of industry and perseverance."—*Lord Bacon*.

"Those who attain any excellence commonly spend life in one common pursuit; for excellence is not often gained upon easier terms."—*Dr. Johnson*.

"He plies her hard, and much rain wears the marble."—*Shakespeare*.

"If there be one thing on earth truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers where they have been honestly, truly, and zealously cultivated."—*Dr. Arnold*.

(3.) *His hope*. "Fear not, neither be discouraged."

"It is said of Abraham that he believed in hope against hope. What is the meaning of these words? The passage intends to express that Divine hope overcame human hope. This is the hope which redounds to the glory of God, because it is an act of homage rendered to His omnipotence. He that is destitute of such hope can have no pretence to saving faith, and not to believe in the promises which God has made to us is an evidence that our souls are altogether fixed upon the toys and vanities of earth. That which the world calls wisdom is nothing more than

foolishness in the sight of God, and disbelief in His word argues a stupid indifference allied to the brute. Faith and hope repose upon the same foundation—the Word of God. The Christian believes in spite of the evidence of his senses, and he hopes for blessings which cannot yet be discerned by the senses. There is no faith where there is doubt and uncertainty; there is no hope where there is hesitation.”—*Chrysostom*.

“Reflected on the lake, I love  
To see the stars of evening glow,  
So tranquil in the heavens above,  
So restless in the wave below.  
Thus heavenly hope is all serene;  
But earthly hope, how bright so e’er,  
Still flutters o’er this changing scene,  
As false, as fleeting as ‘tis fair.”  
—*Heber*.

“Cease every joy to glimmer on my mind,  
But leave—oh! leave the light of Hope  
behind!”  
—*Campbell*.

“A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water; hope lifts up the head and looks up to the redemption and salvation that is to come in another world in its fulness and perfection.”  
—*Polhill*.

III. It reveals the *source* of a good man’s power. “Behold, the Lord thy God hath set,” &c. Think of Moses speaking *thus* after a hundred and twenty years of life. Some grow tired of life and distrustful of God before they are thirty. For a hundred and twenty years Moses had lived near to God—he had *so* lived that God could bless him—God was therefore in all his thoughts.

(1.) God imparts strength to the good for the performance of the most arduous duties.

(2.) The resources of infinite strength always within the reach of the good man.

(3.) The method by which to realise this power is prayer.

There is an excellent story of a young man who was at sea in a mighty raging tempest, and when all the passengers were at their wits’ end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, answered, “That the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew

that his father would have a care of him.”—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

*Necessity of Perseverance.* “The philosopher being asked in his old age why he did not give over his practice and take his ease, answered, ‘When a man is to run a race of forty furlongs, would you have him sit down in the nine and thirtieth and so lose the prize?’ We do not keep a good fire all day, and let it go out in the evening when it is coldest, but then rather lay on more fuel, that we may go warm to bed. Thus he that stakes the heat of zeal in his age will go cold to bed, and in a worse case to his grave. To continue in giving glory to Christ is no less requisite than to begin; though the beginning be more than half, yet the end is more than all. The God of all perfection looks that our *ultimatum vitæ* should be His *optimum gloriæ*, that our last works should be our best works, that we should persevere in goodness to the end.”—*Things New and Old*.

*Goodness.* “The parts and signs of goodness are many. If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them; if he be compassionate towards the afflictions of others, it shows that his heart is like the noble tree that is wounded itself when it gives the balm; if he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries, so that he cannot be shot; if he be thankful for small benefits, it shows that he weighs men’s minds, and not their trash; but, above all, if he have St. Paul’s perfection, that he would wish to be an anathema from Christ for the salvation of his brethren, it shows much of a Divine nature and a kind of conformity with Christ Himself.”—*Lord Bacon*.

God the fountain source of all our blessings. It is said of Hadrian VI., that having built a stately college at Lovain, he set this inscription over the front in golden letters, “Trajectum plantavit, Lovanium rigavit, sed Cæsar dedit incrementum” (Utrecht planted me, for there he was born; Lovain



watered me, for there he was bred ; but Cæsar gave the increase, who from the ferula brought him to the crosier, of a schoolmaster made him Pope of Rome). A witty passenger, reproving his folly, under-wrote, "Here was no room for God to do anything." Thus God may be said not to be in all the thoughts of self-seeking men : they do not, with those ancients, preface to their words, "Theos, Theos," but intervert a great part of the price with that ill couple, turning God's glory into shame, loving vanity, seeking after lies, such as, in the original, will deceive their expectations ; of which sort, by a speciality, is that smoke of popular applause, which, the higher it mounts, the sooner it vanishes and comes to nothing.—*Pulpit Illustrations.*

*Reward of perseverance.* "I recollect in Queen's County to have seen a Mr. Clerk, who had been a working carpenter, and when making a bench for the session's justices at the courthouse, was laughed at for taking peculiar pains in planing and smoothing the seat of it. He smilingly observed that he did so to make it easy for himself, as he was resolved he would never die till he had a right to sit there-upon ; and he kept his word. He was an industrious man—honest, respectable, and kind-hearted. He succeeded in all his efforts to accumulate an independence ; he did accumulate it, and rightly. His character kept pace with the increase of his property, and he lived to sit as a magistrate on that very bench which he sawed and planed."—*Sir Jonah Barrington.*

Vers. 22, 23, (*cf.* Num. xiii. 1, 2). There is no real discrepancy between these passages. The plan of sending the spies originated with the people, and, as in itself a reasonable one, it approved itself to Moses ; was submitted to God and sanctioned by Him ; and carried out under special Divine direction. The orator's purpose in this chapter is to bring before the people emphatically their own responsibilities and behaviour. It is, therefore, important to remind them that the sending of the spies, which led immediately to

their murmuring and rebellion, was their own suggestion.

It is frivolous to object that the generation which had sinned thus was dead, and that Moses was addressing men who had had no concern in the events to which he is referring. That this fact was present to the speaker's mind is clear from vers. 34, 35 ; nay, it was the very aim he had in view, to warn the present generation not to follow their fathers in their perversity, and so defraud themselves of the promised blessing, as their fathers had done. It is but natural that Moses, who had been the leader of the congregation all along, should, when addressing it collectively, treat it as the same which he had brought forth from Egypt, and had now for the second time conducted to the Promised Land.

The following verses to the end of the chapter give a condensed statement, the fuller account being in Num. xiii., xiv., of the occurrences which led to the banishment of the people for forty years into the wilderness. The facts are treated with freedom, as by one familiar with them, addressing those no less so, yet in consistency with the more strictly historical record of Numbers.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Vers. 22, 28. What a contrast these two verses present. The first brings before us the people, with commendable prudence, arranging for carrying out a great plan ; the second presents the most pitiful, contemptible picture one can imagine—the same people, because difficulty presented itself in the way of the purpose being conducted to success, cowardly crying out as the veriest abjects. Well might the words of Job xvii. 11 be quoted in connection with ver. 28 : "My purposes are broken off." The world is full of broken purposes. Every heart is filled with its tombstones raised over dead intentions and desires. The true cemetery is the human heart. Look at it—full of dreams of youth—early ambitions—grand schemes of self-profit, or national benefit, or boundless philanthropy. All dead. Two thoughts—

I. All men have, and have had, pur-

poses. The thought makes one shudder. The conflict of feeling too intense to endure. There were purposes of wealth, the present reality is poverty—the very want of a dinner. Recall Johnson's plans, purposes, and poverty.

"He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that, one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but, in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would stand by their country.'"—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*.

"The longer I live the more I am certain that the great difference between men—between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant—is *energy, invincible determination—a purpose* once fixed, and then *death or victory!* That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talent, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature *a man* without it."—*Buxton*.

II. All men can tell us something about purposes. One can tell us of purposes carried into effect. Another looks to the earth and points to something lying there snapped as a broken spear, and with a deep-drawn moan groans out—"my purpose."

Both these men can instruct. The successful man can show how his success was realised; the unsuccessful can reveal the causes of his failure. Both are governed by a law, if we only knew it.

What is the law of success? The law varies with the sphere in which the success is to be attained, and the nature of the success sought; if the success be earthly merely, then the law of success is in selfishness and ability, or, as one has expressed the idea on its optimist side, "success is the child of cheerfulness and courage;" if, however, the success sought is heavenly, then the law that governs it will be faith in God, and a heart inspired by God's Spirit to do right at any cost. In the one case success is in the possession of a *thing*; in the other in what one *is*.

"Failures are with heroic minds the stepping-stones to success."—

"It is far from true, in the progress of knowledge, that after every failure we must recommence from the beginning. Every failure is a step to success; every detection of what is false directs us to what is true; every trial exhausts some tempting form of error. Not only so, but scarcely any attempt is entirely a failure; scarcely any theory, the result of steady thought, is altogether false; no tempting form of error is without some latent charm derived from truth."—*Whewell*.

"If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius."

—*Addison*.

"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."—*Hebrew Chronicles*.

"The talent of success is nothing more than doing what you can do well, and doing well whatever you do, without a thought of fame."—*Longfellow*.

"I confess," says a thoughtful writer, "that increasing years bring with them an increasing respect for men who do not succeed in life, as those words are commonly used. Ill success sometimes arises from a conscience too sensitive, a taste too fastidious, a self-forgetfulness too romantic, a modesty too retiring. I will not go so far as to say, with a living poet, that the world knows nothing of its greatest men; but there are forms of greatness, or at least of excellence, which 'die and make no sign;' there are martyrs that miss the palm, but not the stake; heroes without the laurel, and conquerors without the triumph."

"Whosoever will live altogether out of himself, and study other men's humours, shall never be unfortunate."—*Sir W. Raleigh*.

"Those who believe in a future state of rewards and punishments act very absurdly if they form their opinion of a man's merits from his successes. But certainly, if I thought the whole circle of our being was included between our births and deaths, I should think a

man's good fortune the measure and standard of his real merit, since Providence would have no opportunity of rewarding his virtue and perfections but in the present life. A virtuous unbeliever, who lies under the pressure of misfortune, has reason to cry out, as they say Brutus did a little before his death, 'O virtue, I have worshipped thee as a substantial good, but I find thou art an empty name.'—*Addison*.

"Had I miscarried, I had been a villain;  
For men judge actions alway by events:  
But when we manage by a just foresight,  
Success is prudence, and possession right."  
—*Higsons*.

"To judge by the event is an error all abuse, and all commit; for in every instance, courage, if crowned with success, is heroism; if clouded by defeat, temerity. When Nelson fought his battle in the Sound, it was the result alone that decided whether he was to kiss a hand at a court, or a rod at a court-martial."—*Colton*.

Ver. 24. "Came unto the valley of Eshcol." In Num. xiii. 22-24, we have a full account of this visit, likewise the meaning of the word Eshcol given. It means "bunch" or "cluster" of grapes (Num. xiii. 24).—*First*. The grapes must have been a welcome sight to the desert-worn travellers. Dr. Livingstone tells us something of this feeling: "In latitude 18° we were rewarded with a sight which we had not enjoyed for a year before—large patches of grape-bearing vines. There they stood before my eyes. The sight was so entirely unexpected that I stood for some time gazing at the clusters of grapes with which they were loaded, with no more thought of plucking than if I had been beholding them in a dream."

"A cluster of grapes of Eshcol, the magnificent richness and size of which may be judged from the circumstance of its being carried on a pole, supported on the shoulders of two men. Eshcol still retains its celebrity for the produce of grapes. Sir M. Montefiore lately got a bunch a yard long."—*Jamieson*.

Ver. 25. "It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us."

These words were spoken primarily with regard to the Land of Promise: but much that was spoken of that promised land, the natural Canaan, may be applied with great propriety and equal force to that promised inheritance of the saints—the spiritual Canaan of the soul. It matters little what image be used for representing that gift (*cf.* Rom. vi. 23) of God, for which among the millions of men's words no one word has been found adequate for its expression, whether we compare it to the "*promised land*" of Palestine, or to "*wisdom*;" for in qualifying the expression of the idea we simply follow the leadings of the metaphor, and, whether we say that "it is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us," or, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness," we in the end say the same thing though by different terms, just as we say one-half or two-quarters or five-tenths. The Christian heritage of a holy and perfected life, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is a "good land" full of richness and fatness, a land of milk and honey; it is also very "pleasant." It is pleasant because good: it is good because pleasant. Though the pleasantness of religion is always difficult of recognition to the young disciple, it is only so because the Cross of Christ has to be carried by the flesh before that Cross can lose its weight, and its material be woven into a crown. Religion is believed to be good because possessed by the best of men: the assurance of its pleasantness comes by the experience of its power. "That pleasure is, in the nature of it, a relative thing, and so imparts a peculiar relation and correspondence to the state and condition of the person to whom it is a pleasure"—*South*. Religion is "good" or "pleasant" from its own inherent nature.

I. Because it is the proper pleasure of that part of man which is the largest and most comprehensive of pleasure, *i.e.*, his mind: a substance of a boundless comprehension.

1. In reference to speculation, as it sustains the name of understanding.



2. In reference to practice, as it sustains the name of conscience.

II. Because it is such a pleasure as never satiates or wearies; for it properly affects the spirit, and a spirit feels no weariness, as being privileged from the causes of it.

The pleasures of the table pall; the pleasures of exercise grow into weariness; but in fulfilled duty is a pleasure (*cf.* work and its joy). How much more in religion! As much as religion is nobler than work.

III. Because it is such as to be in no one's power to take from us, but only in his who has it; so that he who has the property is also sure of its perpetuity. This can be said of no other form of enjoyment. All pass in the using, or are taken away by time. We are at the mercy of men. But though men take away our life they cannot take away that joy of our religion.

"There is nothing that can raise a man to that generous absoluteness of condition, as neither to cringe, to fawn, or to depend meanly; but that which gives him that happiness within himself, for which men depend upon others. For surely I need salute no great man's threshold, sueak to none of his friends or servants, to speak a good word for me to my conscience. It is a noble and a sure defiance of a great malice, backed with a great interest; which yet can have no advantage of a man but from his own expectations of something that is without himself. But if I can make my duty my delight; if I can feast, and please, and caress my mind with the pleasures of worthy speculations or virtuous practices; let greatness and malice vex and abridge me if they can: my pleasures are as free as my will; no more to be controlled than my choice, or the unlimited range of my thoughts and my desires."—*South*.

"Took of the fruit," &c.

Subject: Fruitfulness.

I. Notice the idea of the text as applied to the land. It was fruitful. Eshcol was noted for its fruit. As fruit was gathered from the land, the land was therefore *good*. It had re-

ceived God's gift of capability. God's gift is not the effect of man's labour: though man's apprehension is necessary for the grasping of what God holds out.

II. Notice the idea of the text in its moral bearings. The caterpillar ever encases the butterfly. So physical facts inwrap a moral truth.

(a.) Fruit is the result of cultivation. True in their native state, when wild and uncultivated trees bear *some* fruit; but such fruit is not to be compared with that produced by care and cultivation. The best fruit is the product of art. God works by means.

(b.) Suggests inquiries with regard to our own fruitfulness. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," was an apostolic injunction, and one that no man can dispense with.

Vers. 25, 26. "A good land which the Lord our God doth give us: notwithstanding ye would not go up." God gives bountifully, but the devil strews impediments in the path that leads to possession. The brave, faithful, hopeful, and strong trample over them and realise success; the cowardly, faithless, hopeless, and weak are terrified by these lions in the way, and die ignoble deaths in the presence of what might have been rich possessions. Here we have plainly that though God gives a kingdom—a goodly land—we fail to possess it, because we refuse, through our fears and on account of impediments, to enter upon it.

I. Our animal appetites come into collision with spiritual progress.

"It is reported of the hedgehog that he goes to a pile of apples, and gathers up as many as he can upon his prickles, and when he comes to his hole, he goes in with his prickles but leaves his apples behind him. Thus how many there are who have wallowed in the apples of their pleasures, with many a prick and twinge of conscience, who when they shall descend, as shortly they must, to their holes of darkness, shall be compelled to leave all their sweets of false delight behind them, and carry with them nothing but the stings and soars of a wounded conscience."

There will be no *spiritual* fruit there.

In the pursuit of gross pleasure, the spirit is killed.

II. The lower in man, which belongs to the seen and temporal, urges to the sacrifice of the higher and spiritual. In every life there is a Job's wife saying, "Curse God, and die." No man is free from the voice that whispered in the ear of Judas; some there are who sell the Christ for a paltry few pieces of silver. Adam did that. He bought the present at the cost of the whole future. So Esau; a birthright, for a mess of pottage. It is foolish: more so, criminal.

III. When this is done retribution begins here. God does not wait till man comes into the sphere and region of the eternal to punish. Punishment follows quick upon the sin, in many cases, in this world. Israel was turned back into the desert. David was punished by "the sword" that never left his house (*cf.* 2 Sam. xii. 10). Character is lost. Health departs. Friends are alienated. The heart grows cold and is hardened. Sin slays sympathy with what is divine. Saul had his kingdom taken from him.

*Beware of the lusts of the flesh.*—

"When the oyster opens himself to the sun, being tickled with the warmth thereof, then his enemy, the crab-fish, stealeth behind him, and thrusteth in his claw, and will not suffer him to shut again, and so devoureth him. The like is written of the crocodile, that being so strong a serpent as he is, and impregnable, yet, when he is gaping, to have his teeth picked by the little bird called trochil, his enemy, the ichneumon creepeth into his body, and ceaseth not to gnaw upon his entrails, till he hath destroyed them. Think upon the urchin and the snail: whilst the urchin keeps himself close in the bottom of the hedge, he is either not espied or contemned; but when he creeps forth to suck the cow, he is dogged and chopped in. So the snail, when he lies close, with his house on his head, is esteemed for a dead thing and not looked after; but when in liquorishness, to feed upon the dews that lie upon the grass, or upon the sweetness of the rose-bush, he will

be perking abroad, that the gardener findeth and smashes him. The lesson is: we must not yield to the sweet baits of the flesh, but we must mortify our members upon the earth, and ever beware that we seek not our death in the error of our life: otherwise if we wilfully offer ourselves to be led as an ox to the slaughter, and as a sheep to the shambles, what marvel if we have our throat cut, or be led captive of Satan at his will."

*The danger of fleshly lusts.*—"It is said of the torpedo, a kind of dangerous sea-fish, that it is of so venomous a nature, that if it chance to touch but the line of him that angles, the poison is thereby imparted to the rod, and thence to the hand of him that holds it; whereupon the party is so benumbed and stupefied on a sudden that he loses the use of his limbs. Even so, when enchanting lusts insinuate themselves into, or indeed but barely touch upon, voluptuous minds, they grow, with the companions of Ulysses not only brutish, but withal so senseless, that they have not the power to think a good thought, or to do a good action."—*Things New and Old.*

"For there is no doubt but a man, while he resigns himself up to the brutish guidance of sense and appetite, has no relish at all for the spiritual, refined delights of a soul clarified by grace and virtue. The pleasures of an angel can never be the pleasures of a hog. But this is the thing that we contend for; that a man, having once advanced himself to a state of superiority over the control of his inferior appetites, finds an infinitely more solid and sublime pleasure in the delights proper to his reason, than the same person had ever conveyed to him by the bare ministry of his senses. His taste is absolutely changed, and therefore that which pleased him formerly becomes flat and insipid to his appetite, now grown more masculine and severe."—*South.*

The character of the profligate George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is well known to all who are acquainted with the reign of Charles II. "He was," as said the Earl of Clarendon in his history, "a man of noble presence; he had great

liveliness of wit, and a peculiar faculty of turning serious things into ridicule. He had no principles of religion, virtue, or friendship. Pleasure, frolic, and extravagant diversion, were all he regarded. He had no steadiness of conduct; he could never fix his thought nor govern his estate, though it was at one time the greatest in England. He was bred about the king, and for many years had a great ascendancy over him; but at length he drew a lasting disgrace upon himself, and ruined both body and mind, fortune and reputation. The madness of vice appeared in him in very eminent instances; and at last he became contemptible and poor, sickly, and sunk in all respects, so that his conversation was as much avoided as ever it had been courted." His own state of mind can be best learned from his letter to Dr. Barrow: "Oh what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions—time. I have squandered it with a profusion unparalleled; and now, when the enjoyment of a few days would be worth the world, I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of half a dozen hours. How despicable, my dear friend, is that man who never prays to God but in the hour of distress! In what manner can he supplicate that Omnipotent Being in his afflictions, whom, in the time of his prosperity, he never remembered with reverence. Do not brand me with infidelity, when I tell you that I am almost ashamed to offer up my petitions at the throne of grace, or to implore that Divine mercy in the next world which I have scandalously abused in this. Shall ingratitude to man be looked upon as the blackest of crimes, and not ingratitude to God? Shall an insult offered to the king be looked upon in the most offensive light, and yet no notice be taken when the King of kings is treated with indignity and disrespect? . . . I am forsaken by all my acquaintances: utterly neglected by the friends of my bosom and the dependants of my bounty; but no matter; I am not fit to converse with the former, and have no abilities to serve the latter. Let me not be wholly cast off by the good. Favour me with a visit as soon as possible. Writing to

you gives me some ease, especially on a subject I could talk of for ever. I am of opinion this is the last visit I shall ever solicit from you; my distemper is powerful. Come and pray for the departing spirit of the poor unhappy

"BUCKINGHAM."

In Cunningham's "Lives of Eminent and Illustrious Englishmen," we have the following concerning the same man. "About the period of Charles's death, his own health became so much affected that he was reluctantly compelled to retire into the country to recruit himself. The spot which he made choice of with this view was his own manor of Helmesley, in Yorkshire. Here he generally passed his time betwixt the sports of the chase and the pleasures of the table. An ague and fever, which he caught by sitting on the ground after a long hunt, terminated his life. The attack was so sudden and violent that he could not be removed to his own house, but was conducted to a wretched village inn, where, after languishing three days, he expired, unregretted, and almost unattended. He had lived the life of a profligate, and he died the death of an outcast. It is impossible to say anything favourable of such a man as Villiers, whose sole aim throughout life seems to have been self-gratification, and who scrupled not to commit any crime in the pursuit of this single object."

*The death of Voltaire.*—"In the midst of his triumphs, a violent hemorrhage raised apprehensions for his life:—D'Alembert, Diderot, and Marmontel, hastened to support his resolution in his last moments, but were only witnesses to their mutual ignominy, as well as to his own. Here let not the historian fear exaggeration. Rage, remorse, reproach, and blasphemy, all accompany and characterise the long agony of the dying atheist. His death, the most terrible ever recorded to have stricken the impious man, will not be denied by his companions in impiety. Their silence, however much they may wish to deny it, is the least of those corroborative proofs which might be adduced. Not one of those sophisters has ever dared to mention any sign of resolution or tran-



quillity evinced by their 'great chief' during the space of three months, which elapsed from the time he was crowned in the theatre until his decease. Such a silence expresses how great was their humiliation in his death! . . . .

"The conspirators had strained every nerve to hinder their chief from consummating his recantation; and every avenue was shut to the priests whom Voltaire himself had sent for. The demons haunted every access; rage succeeded to fury, and fury to rage again, during the remainder of his life. Then it was that D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others of the conspirators, who had beset his apartment, never approached him but to witness their own ignominy; and often he would curse them, and exclaim—'Retire! It is you who have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me! And what a wretched glory you have procured me!' Then would succeed the horrid remembrance of his conspiracy. They could hear him the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God against whom he had conspired; and in plaintive accents he would cry out, 'O Christ! O Jesus Christ!' and then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. The hand that had traced, in ancient writ, the sentence of an impious and reviling king, seemed to trace before his eyes the horrid blasphemies which he had so often uttered. In vain he turned his head away; the time was coming apace when he was to appear before the tribunal of Him whom he had insulted; and his physicians, particularly M. Tronchin, calling in to administer relief, thunder-struck, retired, declaring 'that the death of the impious man was terrible indeed.' The pride of the conspirators would willingly have suppressed these declarations, but it was in vain. The Mareschal de Richelieu fled from his bedside, declaring 'it to be a sight too terrible to be sustained;' and M. Tronchin, 'that the furies of Orestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.'"—*Abbe Barruel*, quoted in "The Christian's Sketch Book."

Vers. 21 and 26. "Go up." . . . "Ye would not."

What is this but unbelief on the part of Israel? Though God had promised to give the land, the people had refused to take it. Why? Because a few cowardly spies said, "It will be hard work." And the work became harder to the minds of this people because they had no faith in God, who helps in the accomplishment of all work. If they had believed God, difficulty would have been nothing.

I. God might have abstained from all interferences in the life and action of Israel. But He was pleased to identify Himself with His people (*cf.* Heb. xi. 23-27).

II. God continues that interest spiritually. Those who believe He helps. Those who believe not are condemned, powerless, ruined (*John* iii. 18).

III. When salvation is provided, the anger of God will be great if it be refused (*cf.* Pharaoh). Israel hardened his neck. "He that hardens his heart is suddenly cut off."

IV. Help is provided for the sinner, but many will not accept it. "Ye would not go up."

- (a.) Its necessity—man is dead.
- (b.) Nature of the help—life (*cf.* *John* x. 10).
- (c.) Its completeness (*cf.* work of Christ).

Vers. 26-30. Pictures presented here:

1. A calm righteous man, vers. 26 and 29.

2. Impotent rage, vers. 27, 28.
3. Perfect confidence in personal destiny, vers. 29, 30.

Vers. 26-36. There is something very brave and outspoken in these words. Picture a man standing up before an infuriated people with the calmness that the tone of this passage implies. (*Cf.* a great political leader *rebuking* a Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square popular demonstration.) The Christian minister is at times in such position. He must preach a truth unsavoury to the natural man. Let there be the same calm, brave outspokenness, and force of

dignity. Moses' power in the God who was speaking through him. Four points—

I. His entire self-possession.

II. A co-operator with God.

III. His power to adapt himself to great crises.

IV. He could rebuke, because he knew much and loved much. His position among the people the result of his identifying himself with them in their need (Heb. xi. 23–27).

Ver. 26. "Ye would not go up," &c. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," said a later oracle. Calm reflection compels one almost to say that rebellion against God is insanity. No good, ultimately, is gained by it.

I. All trifling with the Divine law involves at least the degradation of him who trifles with it (*cf.* *vera.* 33, 34). Sometimes his accomplices (*cf.* Ananias and Sapphira). Sometimes his friends, even though they be innocent (*cf.* Achan). "Sin of father visited upon children," &c.

II. All honour of the law secures exaltation in the kingdom of heaven (*cf.* 36–38). "They that honour Me will I honour."

(a.) Law of God in harmony with man's constitution.

(b.) God's law is God's advice for man to act by.

III. Man is to regulate his conduct by divine law, and not by human standards. "Act from a maxim at all times fit for law universal."—*Kant*. He who walks at noon lighted by a taper will be held guilty for all the consequences of such act. These men had to suffer all the effects possible on one act of folly and wrong.

IV. There is one characteristic in which the law of Christ is one with the law of Moses. Obedience to it is necessary. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (*cf.* John xiv. 21). "If a man love Me, he will keep My words," said Christ, "and My Father will love him." The Father's love consequent on the keeping of the words.

V. Let us take warning, and be careful how we treat the law of Christ, lest,

through unbelief and consequent failure of purpose, we be shut out of a better country (*cf.* all the early chapters of Epistle to the Hebrews).

"Ye rebelled," &c.

Human conduct is affected by the religious life of the community. We cannot live without God without losing spiritual life (*cf.* John xvi. 4–17). Such alienation acts most ruinously upon the heart life, which is the centre of being and the source of our activities.

I. God's covenant forsaken.

II. This means entering into covenant with the devil. He that is not for, is against.

III. Man becomes blinded to right.

IV. His blindness prevents his seeing the precipice of ruin on which he stands.

"Ye would not," &c.

Here are people who knew the will and command of God, yet would not obey. "Ye would not go up. From the words we may infer—

I. The possibility of *knowing* the law, but obstinately and persistently transgressing it (*cf.* Judas, Byron, Voltaire). These all *knew* what was right.

II. The possibility of having the law of God enforced upon us by a divinely-inspired and appointed prophet without it affecting us. How many hearers every Sunday murmur at preachers, men of God and true! *Moses* spoke: the people heedless. They would be the same if one spoke from the dead (Luke xix. 29–31).

III. The law of God must be obeyed whether it meet our approbation or not. It is *God's* law; that is sufficient.

(a.) Show it is *God's* law.

(b.) God's law may be known from its harmoniousness with the highest principles of right in our being; and from its meeting the necessary requirements of man's nature.

(c.) No command of God contrary to the law of the universe (*cf.* teaching of Christ—nature was the language of His thoughts).

The inconsiderate multitude.

"We see by experience that dogs do always bark at those they know not;

and that it is their nature to accompany one another in those clamours : and so it is with the inconsiderate multitude, who, wanting that virtue which we call honesty in all men, and that especial gift of God which we call charity in Christian men, condemn without hearing, and wound without offence given.—*Sir Walter Raleigh.*

“*Notwithstanding.*” Although God had done so much, this was their only return. Nothing is more strongly marked in some dispositions than ingratitude.

“On adamant our wrongs we all engrave,  
But write our benefits upon the wave.”  
—*King.*

“Ingratitude ! thou marble-hearted friend ;  
More hideous, when thou showest thee in a  
child,  
Than the sea monster.” —*Shakespeare.*

“We seldom find people ungrateful as long as we are in a condition to render them services.”—*Rochefoucauld.*

Of such it may be said, “Gratitude is a sense of favours yet to come.”

“Ingratitude is abhorred of God and man.”—*L'Estrange.*

“He that calls a man ungrateful sums up all the evil that a man can be guilty of.”—*Swift.*

“One ungrateful man does an injury to all who stand in need of aid.”—*Publius Syrus.*

Ingratitude reproved.

“An empty bucket that is let down into a well doth, as it were, open its mouth to receive the water ; but being drawn up full sheweth his bottom only to the well that gave it. The sea receives her moisture from heaven, sweet and pleasant, but returns it salt and brackish. The clouds by the power of the sun-beams are exhaled from the earth ; but, being once mounted, they darken that air and obscure that sun that raised them. The frozen snake in the fable stingeth him that refreshed it. Thus it is with all unthankful men, men ungrateful to God ; He ladeth daily with benefits and blessings, and they lade Him with sins and trespasses.”—*Things New and Old.*

“Athenæus reporteth of Milesius that,  
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having brought a dolphin alive, and letting him go again into the sea ; afterwards, himself being cast away by shipwreck, and ready to perish in the midst of the waters, the dolphin took him and carried him safely to shore. . . . It is more than beastly ingratitude for any man to reward evil for good.”—*Things New and Old.*

Ver. 27. “Ye murmured.” “And you took your sons and daughters into your bosoms.”—*Targum of Jonathan.*

“Because the Lord hates,” &c. “This evil saying Moses would not have his enemies say (Deut. ix. 28). It shows the height of their sin which imputed that to hatred wherein God manifested His love (Deut. iv. 37, vii. 8).”—*Ainsworth.*

“Lord God hated us.” An instance of how men rush to conclusions from insufficient premises. For homiletic purposes we might notice—

I. The impossibility of correctly educating ultimate principles and formulating doctrines thereon from a limited number of facts.

II. The danger of permitting feeling to usurp where judgment should rule.

III. The temptation to exaggerate extraordinary circumstances into utterly false facts.

IV. The danger of determining the will and nature of God by human wisdom and experience alone.

V. The necessity of *knowing* God (*cf.* passages in New Testament where *knowing* God is referred to) before affirming anything of Him. Moses *knew* God. How differently would he have interpreted His providence. Could God but speak to every man, much of the mystery and mercy in many lives would instantly disappear. Read Scripture. They testify of God.

“Ye murmured in your tents.”

It must have been a stirring sight to see the thousands of Israel standing in the doors of their tents :—A wild horde of semi-barbarians, fierce in their rage, and almost ungovernable. What a picture of a sinful world, where all men are uncultivated in the ways of holiness and submission—a frantic host of moral



and spiritual maniacs. More than once had Moses such an experience. No penitence; no submission; no hope: rage on every face.

I. The sorrow of this people had reference to the loss of what they esteemed valuable. Things are not valuable to the multitude for what they are in themselves, but according to people's ideas of them. (*Cf.* Bear robbed of her whelps.) Fierce! The whelps precious to the bear. There is real worth—a something valuable in itself.

"Greatness and goodness are not means, but ends:

Hath he not alway treasures, alway friends,  
The good great man! Three treasures,—

Love and Light,

And calm Thoughts, regular as infant's  
breath;

And three firm friends, more sure than day  
or night,—

Himself, his Maker, and the Angel  
Death." —Coleridge.

"Sorrow being the natural and direct offspring of sin, that which first brought sin into the world must, by necessary consequence, bring in sorrow too."—*South.*

Man has a true cause for sorrow when he loses his soul, as he does by sin, for he loses something really valuable. For such many are satisfied, with very quiet, well-behaved sorrow indeed.

II. This sorrow was more passionate and all-absorbing, because of the unexpectedness of its cause. This grief came as a sudden pain. It was acute, not chronic. Long pains deaden.

"The violence of sorrow is not at the first to be striven withal; being, like a mighty beast, sooner tamed with following than overthrown by understanding."

—*Sir. P. Sydney.*

Enmity to God.—"It profits us nothing to be peaceful toward all men if we be at war with God; it is no good to us if all men approve, and the Lord be offended; neither is there any danger, though all shun and hate us, if with God we find acceptance and love."—*Chrysostom.*

"No man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person from what befalls him in this world."—*Tillotson.*

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"From the instant of our birth we experience the benignity of Heaven, and the malignity of corrupt nature."—*Trusler.*

Vers. 24–28. The spies report and its effect.

The beginning of any line of conduct usually enables an attentive observer to form a just anticipation of the manner in which it will be pursued. If the beginning is right, the end is right. If the end is a failure, a something wrong is implied in the beginning. The people proposed to send spies. So artfully were their guilty motives concealed, that Moses failed to see them and was even pleased with the proposal. The result, however, reveals all. A voice of warning is meant to reach our conscience from the page of Jewish history (*cf.* 1 Cor. x. 11). The fact and its lessons may be considered under three heads:—

I. The conduct of the unfaithful spies.

II. The conduct of Caleb and Joshua.

III. The conduct of the guilty nation.

I. The conduct of the unfaithful spies.

1. Men of position.

2. Their commission clearly defined (*Num.* xiii. 18–20).

3. They accomplished their work safely.

4. God showed Himself with them.

Thus far, well. But they were men of sight, not faith. All that God had revealed went for nothing. They saw only difficulties. They overlooked what God had done for them. They discouraged the people.

II. "As there is no society free from some corruption, so it is hard, if in a community of men there be not some faithfulness." Such fidelity was shown by Joshua and Caleb. They form a contrast with the ten. But Israel would not hear them. The world will ever hear its own prophets; and stone those who speak in the name of God.

III. The conduct of the guilty nation. If experience had been of any use to Israel they would surely have listened to Caleb and Joshua; but with *such* experience is thrown away.

1. The unfaithful spies and guilty multitude represent a class;—*the timid*

and desponding professors of religion who need to be warned of their SIN.

2. "There are many, however, who possess a portion of that flame which glowed in the hearts of Caleb and Joshua; men gifted with courage for the warfare of life, and zealous for their God."—*Buddicom*.

Ver. 28. "Walled up to heaven." An hyperbole. Contrast hyperbole with reality: reality with hyperbole. *Hyperbole*, a figure in rhetoric by which anything is increased or diminished beyond exact truth, e.g., "he runs faster than lightning."—*Latham*. Reality is opposed to shadows, types, pictures.—*Whately*. What is, not what merely seems.—*Latham*.

"A bird carries the voice" (Eccl. i. 20); "Amorites whose height was height of cedars" (Amos iii. 9) are hyperboles. "Length of bedstead of Og reality, no hyperbole."—*Maimonides*.

(See also "Quintilian Instit.," book viii. c. 6, and Patrick on this passage).

"Walled up to heaven." "This description of the cities as 'high and walled up to heaven,' though a strong hyperbole, answers the description of most Eastern cities whose walls are smooth, very lofty, and difficult to be scaled. The walls were of mud or of stone; and as the people were unacquainted with scaling ladders, whenever they had surrounded their cities with walls too high for man to climb over, they considered their security established. The same simple expedient is resorted to by the Arabs who live in the very wilderness in which Israel wandered, and who are far more inured to warlike enterprises than that people were. The great monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai is built of freestone, with high smooth walls. On the east side there is a window by which those that are within draw up pilgrims into the monastery with a basket, which they let down by a rope that runs through a pulley to be seen above at the window, and the pilgrims go into it one after another. These walls are so high that they cannot be scaled, and without cannon the place cannot be taken."—*Thevenot*.

"Whither shall we go up?" Agreeably to the nature of interrogative particles, *whither* sometimes including a negative, may be resolved into *nowhere*.—*Fürst*. This suggests that we may interpret the verse:—"What is the use of struggling and toiling? We have nowhere to go. We may as well give up at once."

"Our brethren discouraged our hearts" (*cf.* "Crit. Notes"). The Bible is full of human nature. Man is to-day as he was 3000 years ago. Godless men had no courage for themselves, and, dog-in-the-manger like, would not let others have it. They took away what little the people had. We have here old types of a modern class. Two facts about them—

I. They see the difficulty of life, but no God to help them in it.

II. The difficulties seen, cause fear, and then fears magnify the difficulties.

Ver. 29. "Dread not." To deliver them from fear Moses adds two powerful arguments. He gives reasons for what he bids them do—

I. A promise of Divine assurance:—"The Lord . . . He shall fight," ver. 30.

II. The experience of past mercies:—"God bare thee," &c., ver. 31 (*cf.* His dealings with them in Egypt, wilderness, &c.); (*cf.* Isa. xlix. 22 with Exod. xix. 4).

Compare John xiv. 1, Luther's trans. Christ gives two reasons for disciples' faith. Ye believe in God—ye believe in Christ:—therefore no reason to fear.

Vers. 28, 29. Contrast by comparison of these two verses the character of the *people* and the character of *Moses*. Moses, strong: people, weak. In life of Moses a firm, clear, strong purpose; the nation swayed by every wind that blew. The character of Moses, as opposed to that of the people, might aptly illustrate the character of the Christian who has truly laid his foundation on the Rock, in contrast with that of a worldling who is tossed as a straw upon the waters. The true Christian is essentially and pre-eminently a religious man. *Has*

fixed principles and purpose in life. Religion means harmony with God.

I. Religion is a reality.

II. Religion is a reality in the soul.

III. Religion is a vital reality in the soul.

IV. Religion is a vital reality in the soul, ever discernible. True religion is known.

(a.) In its essence.

(b.) Manifestations.

(c.) By its fruits.

Vers. 28, 29. Contrast Moses and the spies. Moses encouraged; the spies discouraged. Here, extremes of character; courage, cowardice. Many such antitheses of character in Scripture. Hezekiah and Manasseh; Jacob, Esau; Jesus, Judas; Judas, the residence of Satan; Jesus, the residence of all the godhead bodily. But watch the influence of the bad; it undoes all the good accomplished. The people discouraged; the Son of God sold, &c. A few lessons may be gathered from these facts:—

I. Too intimate connection between the Church and world may prove injurious to the Church. "Man cannot handle pitch," &c. The people discouraged though they had a Moses.

"It is better, safer I am sure it is, to ride alone, than to have a thief's company. And such is a wicked man, who will rob thee of precious time, if he do thee no more mischief. The Nazarites, who might drink no wine, were also forbidden to eat grapes, whereof wine is made (Num. vi. 3). So we must not only avoid sin itself, but also the causes and occasions thereof, amongst which, bad company—the lime-twigs of the devil—is the chiefest, especially to catch those natures which, like the good-fellow-planet Mercury, are most swayed by others."—*T. Fuller*.

II. Hypocrites are more injurious to the Church than non-professors. The people had not been affected by foes quite as terrible in the wilderness as those in Canaan. Opinions of enemies do not affect: it is the thought of a friend that influences. These spies were supposed to be friends: they were in service of Israel; the hypocrite is often

in the service of the Church: the acknowledged friend. The Church is identified with him.

(a.) The world depends upon him for its opposition to religion.

(b.) Hypocrites become the leader of the enemy after leaving Christ (*cf.* Judas. He led the band, &c.).

(c.) They know the failures of Christian brethren, because taken into confidence as friends.

(Explain what a hypocrite is, *ὑποκριτής* = one who plays upon the stage. An actor—feigner. Therefore a false pretender to virtue or piety.)

III. Feeble moral characters injurious to the Church. But remember two facts with regard to the Church—

(a.) It is an hospital for souls' disease, as well as (b.) the home of the strong in Christ. Be tender to the weak, but restrain them from the positions of the tried and strong.

IV. The world's joy and the Church's grief. If the heathen had known what grief there was in Israel, their heart doubtless rejoiced. Often what is death to one is pleasure to another (*cf.* fable of boys and frogs). Death of Christ, the life of the world (*cf.* John xi. 50). "One man's loss another's gain."

Ver. 29. "Dread not," &c. Encouragement.

I. Every good work is sure to meet with opposition. In every journey there will necessarily be rough places.

II. Christians are not required to go anywhere where their Captain has not gone before.

III. The Christian is not to wait till all difficulties are removed. His action will sometimes remove difficulties. "Go forward," &c. (*cf.* Josh. iii. 15).

Faithful discharge of duty in everyday life is doing God's work: the promise of the following verse applies to the removal of difficulties, &c., and the fighting for us in the warfare of daily experience, business, family, &c.

*Man's need, God's opportunity.*— "Philo, the Jew, being employed as an ambassador or messenger to Caius Caligula, the emperor of Rome, his entertainment was but slight, for he had no



sooner spoken on the behalf of his country, but he was commanded to depart the court; whereupon he told his people that he was verily persuaded that God would now do something for them, because the emperor was so earnestly bent against them."—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

Vers. 29, 30. Dread not, &c.

The desponding encouraged. Much in life to depress. Opposition quickly rises. Success dependent on courage. Conquest wavers with the wavering heart. Napoleon lost a battle through a bilious fit. Strongest, coolest, bravest, have seasons when they need encouragement. Three ways in which Moses encouraged—

I. By appeal to the fact of God's presence. "The Lord God which goeth before you."

II. By appeal to the success of the past (*cf.* ver. 31). "In the wilderness . . . where God bare thee," &c.

III. By appeal to future success, ver. 30. "He shall fight."

Success in undertakings is not infrequently the result of very unlikely and small beginnings. The following incident from the battle between Marcellus the Roman, and Hannibal the Carthaginian, cited from Plutarch, well illustrates the point:—

"Both armies then engaged, and Hannibal, seeing no advantage gained by either, ordered his elephants to be brought forward into the first line, and to be pushed against the Romans. The shock caused great confusion at first in the Roman front; but Flavius, a tribune, snatching an ensign staff from one of the companies, advanced, and with the point of it wounded the foremost elephant. The beast upon this turned back, and ran upon the second, the second upon the next that followed, and so on till they were all put in great disorder. Marcellus observing this, ordered his horse to fall furiously upon the enemy, and, taking advantage of the confusion already made, to rout them entirely. Accordingly, they charged with extraordinary vigour, and drove the Carthaginians to their entrenchments. The slaughter was dreadful; and the fall

of the killed, and the plunging of the wounded elephants, contributed greatly to it. It is said that more than 8000 Carthaginians fell in this battle; of the Romans not above 3000 were slain." All this success, in a measure, was owing to a man wounding an elephant with an ensign staff."

"Success may be delayed for a time. Failure may seem to attend our work. There may be no blossoms or fruit now; but it *will* come. Our judgment is often rash and premature. The sailor predicts storms; there is a great calm: the merchant a panic; there is a rich harvest: the minister barrenness; there is an abundant blessing." The spies said the land is full of big men: Moses said God will help us. It matters not who is *against*, if God is only *for* us.

*Faith produces Confidence*.—"In the midst of a tumultuous sea the modes of the compass remain immovable, because they govern themselves, not according to the winds, but according to the influence of the heavens. So the faith of the faithful remaineth firm amongst the rude agitations and distracted variations of the world, because it governeth itself, not according to the instability of the affairs of this world, but according to the promises of God, which are from all eternity."—*Pulpit Illustrations*.

*Power of Faith*.—"When Toxaris saw his countryman Anacharsis in Athens, he said unto him, I will show thee all the wonders of Greece: in seeing Solon thou seest all, even Athens itself, and the whole glory of the Greeks. Tell me, Christian, hast thou faith and assured trust in the Lord? then thou hast more than all the wonders of Greece, upon the point all the wonderful gifts of grace; for faith is the mother virtue from which all others spring, and without faith all the best of our actions are no better than sin."—*Things New and Old*.

Ver. 30. "The Lord your God . . . goeth before you." We need to read side by side with these words those of the apostle: "Because greater is He that is in *you* than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). When a man is

tenanted by God, he has not much reason to fear, for he becomes an inheritor of the visions and experience of Elisha (*cf.* 2 Kings vi. 16-18).

I. Show wherein God is with us.

(a.) God with a man by his faith. Paradoxical though it sounds, yet true. To believe in God is to realise the emotions of the Divine presence. Such feelings strengthen. Faith in the Almighty calls forth enthusiasm and courage. For so long as there is faith, hope burns. The soldiers who had faith in Napoleon had his courage in their heart. They conquered.

(b.) God with a man by His word. One way to communicate ourselves to others is to speak to them. Sometimes the written word suffices. A word from a distant friend gives us the *man* even more than his bodily presence would without the word. So God sends His word to men. There is the word spoken by the prophet. There is the Living Word, Jesus Christ; the expression of the Father's heart.

(c.) God is with a man by His Spirit. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" "Know ye not that the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us?"

II. Show how the Divine Presence bears upon the soul.

(a.) The power is in us by which to gain fully the world of our hopes. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He *ἐξουσίαν*" (not merely capability = *δυναμὴν*, Lücke,—still less privilege or prerogative (Chrysostom and others),—but *power*, De Wette; involving all the actions and states needful to them so becoming and removing all the obstacles in their way, *e.g.*, the wrath of God and the guilt of sin, Alford) "to become the children of God—to those which believe in His name."

(b.) By this power man is superior to the world (*cf.* 1 John v. 4, 5).

(c.) This power gives moral and spiritual advancement in life.

"Cherished with hope, and fed with joy, it grows;

In cheerful buds their opening bloom disclose,

And round the happy soil diffusive odours flows."

—Pope.

Vers. 29, 30. "Be not afraid. . . . God fights for you."

Here in all the light and shade of historic life is a picture of the soul that is in Christ Jesus—a spirit with God fighting for it, on its side (*cf.* Rom. viii. 1-17). The natural man is apart from God; he has to fight for himself. The man who like ancient Israel has entered into covenant with God, has passed from Death—alienation, into Life—co-operation with God, and he has *God* fighting his battles for him. The past becomes an earnest of the future. The grace given a deposit of the whole amount to be given in the Spirit's subsequent developments.

I. Man in Christ is freed from sin. He has escaped from the slavery of *him* or *that* which is opposed to the divine will. He lives and works with God: God with him.

II. By this man is advanced in moral and spiritual excellence. He is no longer a slave. He is Christ's free man. The true idea of Divine holiness is realised. The man knows daily from joy-filled triumph, and experience, that God is on his side, overcoming evil in his nature, harmonising discord, and restoring him, the man, to the likeness of a Son of God.

III. Man in Christ is destined for future glorification. (Beniseh translate ver. 30, "The *Eternal* your God," &c.) What an Eternal Being does is worthy of Eternity. The glory of man must have a larger arena than the confined amphitheatre of Time.

IV. He is destined to enjoy the glory which belongs to Christ Himself (*cf.* John xvii. 20-23).

Ver. 30. "He shall fight for you," &c. The Helper of His people. If God were only an idea, then the utterance of such a thought would be the cruellest act that demon-spirit could prompt, for hopes of the most sensitive nature would be raised only to be dashed down again. But because God is not an *idea* but a living *person*—the Hearer and Answerer of prayer—the sympathetic Friend—the Giver of grace for bearing sorrow—the thought of a

Helping God is one of the most encouraging to which man is legatee.

I. God's people often placed in circumstances of great difficulty. There are foes in the flesh; weakness and discord in the spirit; difficulties of many kinds without. All these have to be met. A man cannot at all times fight them for himself.

II. Help is given far superior not only to that of the strongest moments of a man's own natural power, but superior to that power which impedes his course.

III. This help only recognised by God's own people. Their eyes alone see the spiritual forms at hand to aid (*cf.* *Elisba* and his servant). Having eyes, they see.

IV. This sight requires the supernatural agency of Christ. He alone gives sight to the blind that they may see. The world is filled with God's glory could man but look upon it. Moses could see the power of God at hand to help even though the people were entirely ignorant of it.

Ver. 30. "The Lord your God shall fight," &c.

Though this passage in its primary and historical sense refers to Israel's conflict with the enemies who kept him from the promised land, yet the Christian, with his spiritual age illumined with the light of glory, may see beyond the letter into the mysterious import of the spirit; for he deals with the truth which the word enshrines. The Christian has his battle to fight. We might notice—

I. That the battle is for a dominion: Israel fought for a promised land, the Christian for a promised crown of life. Satan offered *all* the kingdoms of the world to Christ, but His *one* crown was more to Him than they all.

II. The battle in which the Christian is engaged is won by faith. Israel lost because he did not believe God. The Christian fails when his faith is weak (*cf.* Peter on the water. The disciples in the storm. Victory of faith, &c.).

III. The Christian's battle is sure to

result in victory (*cf.* John xvi. 33). (*Cf.* the whole of Christ's promise of help in His last great speech, John xiv.—xviii.)

Ver. 31. "As a man doth bear his son" (*cf.* Num. xi. 12). "A simile suggested by his sojourn in the desert of Midian with Jethro."—*Keil* and *Delitzsh*.

"Supplying you with water out of the rock, sending bread from heaven, defending you from the wild beasts and fiercer enemies, and bearing with your numerous provocations."—*Clapham*.

"I, said (God), who was a father, became nurse, and My little one I Myself carried in My arms, lest it should be hurt in the wilderness, and lest it should be frightened by the heat or darkness; in the day I was a cloud, by night a pillar of fire."—*Jerome*.

It is the realisation in one's own heart of this *presence* by day and night that makes the true child of God courageous. While God is Father and nurse man has not much to fear. There is a story told of St. Basil that well illustrates this. The emperor sent to him to subscribe to the Arian heresy. The messenger at first used good language, and promised great performance if he would turn Arian; to which Basil replied, "Alas! their speeches are fit to catch little children who seek such things, but we that are *nourished* and taught by the Holy Scriptures are readier to suffer a thousand deaths than suffer one syllable a little of the Scriptures to be altered." The messenger told him he was mad. He replied, "I wish I were for ever thus mad." It matters not whether it be Apostle, Father, or Reformer. All are alike. Paul, Basil, Luther, each had the same presence—each had the same courage.

We have this beautifully exemplified in the life of one who perished by shipwreck only a few years ago, the Rev. J. Mackenzie:—"In the brief interval, which elapsed between the vessel's striking and her going down, an attempt was made by some of the passengers to lower the two quarter-boats; but both were instantly swamped, and about a dozen lives were lost in them. Mr.



Mackenzie, meanwhile, had got on deck, but though a good swimmer, he appears to have made no effort to save himself. When last seen by one of the few survivors, he was engaged in prayer on the quarter-deck. 'I heard,' he says, 'the minister who was on board call to those around him that, as there was no hope of safety, they should engage in prayer. He then began to pray, the rest of the passengers kneeling around him. He was as cool and as collected as I am now, and the others were praying too; but his voice was raised above the rest.' And thus with the great Father's name upon his lips, and the great Father's love warm in his dauntless heart, did this noble Christian man go down into the cold, bleak, midnight sea, to find his Father's bosom *there*."—*Pulpit Analyst*.

Ver. 32. "Ye did not believe."

Unbelief is spiritual death, and the desolation of manhood. In order to see this more fully, it may be observed that—

I. Unbelief *imprisons* or *confines* manhood. The feelings and aspirations, the longings and the hopes of man's higher nature, would go beyond the present and the visible, and faith alone can secure their fitting exercise; but unbelief holds them back, limits them, confines them to earth, and to things that are seen and temporal. It cramps the energies of being, and restrains the healthy outgoings of the soul. Such imprisonment of the spiritual powers much tend to desolation and decay.

II. Unbelief *starves* manhood; man needs truth to live upon as well as bread; but, as we have seen, he cannot of himself know all the truth; there must be faith as the means of the highest knowledge. God has come down to reveal Himself to us, and to supply this knowledge as the true and healthy aliment of our spiritual being. Christ is the "bread of life," the true bread that came down from heaven; but unbelief refuses it,—will not partake of it, so that the soul is starved; and surely this tends to spiritual destruction.

III. Unbelief *outrages* manhood; it

does it injury and violence. We say that man was formed for truth; hence to indulge in falsehood violates his true nature. Man was formed for reason, and to act irrationally is a violation of the true law of our being; so man was formed for faith, and to refuse faith where faith is due, where faith is essential, and where God Himself comes down to woo it and to gain it, is an outrage upon manhood. Such moral violence must tend to desolation and abiding darkness.—*Rev. James Spence, M.A.*

Ver. 32. "Ye did not believe the Lord your God." The truth wrapped up here is as important to the Christian as to the Jew—to-day, as when Moses uttered it. Here is implied, even if not definitely taught, the power of faith. By comparison with the context is discerned the fact that *faith* on the part of the people would have enabled God to have conquered their enemies (*cf.* Binney's book: "Practical Nature of Faith)."

Ver. 32. "Yet in this ye did not believe." Not a small portion of the chapter is taken up with reminding the people of God's special intervention in their behalf. Though their whole history is full of divine action for them, God's mercies are quickly forgotten. They are ever ready to disobey His law, or to give allegiance to idols. Chastisements intended for repentance were not heeded. Such being ineffectual, God becomes angry and casts them off. There are three matters for consideration suggested by these words—

I. The possibility of dishonouring the great memories of life. "In *this* they did not believe God," even though they had had so many reasons why they should. Who could forget Egyptian bondage—the passage of the sea—the manna—cloud—fire, &c.? Who could forget the joy of deliverance—the rapture of ecstasy when God had revealed Himself, and had worked for them? Yet this people did! Though God had done so much, they did not believe His promise. Memories of life can be dishonoured—frequently are.

II. The possibility of underestimating the interposition of God. Look at the case suggested by the chapter (*cf.* Jer. ii. 5, 6). They had come through a terrible wilderness—land of desert and pits—of drought—a land where no man passed—no man dwelt—the shadow of death. Viewed prospectively, men shrink from such difficulties; viewed retrospectively, many of the terrors are forgotten. Though God had led through all this, all is forgotten. That such could have been forgotten is a revolting illustration of the soul's depravity. But human nature is such that the highest offices rendered by God and man can be lightly esteemed by it, and even the blood of the Covenant be trodden under foot.

III. The possibility of the leading minds of the Church being darkened and perverted. It seems that the whole nation, chiefs and people, were alike unmindful of the heavenly calling (*cf.* Jer. ii. 8). History of Israel at the time of Elijah. Epochs in the life of the Church, *e.g.*, the Reformation.

The Hebrew proverb said, "As priest as people." The saying may be reversed. As people so leaders; for the leader is often but the adroit follower. When he should stand up with a protest, too frequently such an one truckles to the popular cry. He worships the crowd, and leaves Truth and Right to take care of themselves. It behoves, therefore—

1. That such men should watch themselves with constant jealousy.

2. Such should never be forgotten by those who pray.

Ver. 32. "Yet in this ye did not believe," &c.

A charge of infidelity. This is quickly followed with the chastisement of infidelity. The wise learn by the woes of others. If the unfaithful be punished, it is not unreasonable to expect that the faithful are rewarded. From other Scripture we know that it is so (*cf.* Rev. ii. 10). Let us apply this in its Christian bearings.

I. Christ's religion requires faithfulness.

(a.) The Christian should make use of all his powers on behalf of religion.

(b.) The Christian should make use of all his powers for the religious circle wherein he lives.

(c.) The Christian should make use of all his powers according to the will of God.

II. Christ's religion requires personal fidelity. It mattered not that "Moses was faithful in all his house." God judged the people for what *they* were.

(a.) Every Christian has a personal work to accomplish.

(b.) Every Christian is endowed with power to accomplish his own work.

(c.) Every Christian is under a personal obligation to be faithful.

III. Christ's religion requires continual faithfulness. It must not be fitful. "*Watch*" was Christ's command.

(a.) Because the work is great.

(b.) Because the time is short.

IV. Christ's religion rewards faithfulness.

(a.) Religious reward is precious.

(b.) Religious reward is glorious.

(c.) Religious reward is durable.

(d.) Religious reward is personal.

*Folly of Infidelity.*—"And is it possible that you (Paine) should think so highly of your performance, as to believe that you have thereby demolished the authority of a book, which Newton himself esteemed the most authentic of all histories? Which by its celestial light illumines the darkest ages of antiquity; which is the touchstone whereby we are enabled to distinguish between true and fabulous theology; between the God of Israel, holy, just, and good, and the impious rabble of heathen Balaam; which has been thought by competent judges to have afforded matter for the laws of Solon, and a foundation for the philosophy of Plato; which has been illustrated by the labour of learning in all ages and in all countries, and been admired and venerated for its piety, its sublimity, and its veracity, by all who were able to read and understand it. Nor have you gone, indeed, through the word with the best intention in the world to cut it down; but you have busied yourself

merely in exposing to vulgar contempt a few unsightly shrubs, which good men had wisely concealed from public view. You have entangled yourself in thickets of thorn and briar; you have lost your way on the mountains of Lebanon, the goodly cedar trees whereof, lamenting the madness, and pitying the blindness of your rage against them, have scorned the blunt edge and the base temper of your axe, and laughed unhurt at the feebleness of your stroke. The Bible has withstood the learning of Porphyry, and the power of Julian, to say nothing of the Manichean Faustus. It has resisted the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, to say nothing of a numerous herd of inferior assailants; and it will not fall by your force. You have barbed anew the blunted arrows of former adversaries; you have feathered them with blasphemy and ridicule; dipped them in your deadliest poison; aimed them with your utmost skill; shot them against the shield of truth with your utmost vigour; but, like the feeble javelin of the aged Priam, they will scarcely reach the mark—will fall to the ground without a stroke.”—*Watson.*

*Infidelity barren of virtue.*

“This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtue as it is prolific in crimes.” . . . “As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes the whole happiness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life.” . . . “In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach; but to what history, to what record, will they appeal, for any traits of moral greatness, any sacrifice of interest or life, any instances of daring heroic virtues exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of

inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a very different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory and disastrous lustre.”—*R. Hall.*

*God's goodness, man's ingratitude.*

“It is storied of a certain king that, fighting a desperate battle for the recovery of his daughter stolen from him, he found but ill success, and the day utterly against him, till by the valour of a strange prince, disguised in the habit of a mean soldier (that pitied his loss and bore love to his daughter), he recovered both her and victory. Not long after, this prince received a wrong, which he brought to the king, that he might receive justice. The king handed him over to a judge. The prince replied, ‘Know this, O king, when *thou* wast lost, *I* stood betwixt thee and danger, and did not bid *another* save thee, but saved thee myself; behold the scars of those wounds I bore to free thee and thy state from ruin inevitable, and now my suit is before thee dost thou shuffle me off to another?’ Such was our case; Satan had stolen our dear daughter the soul,—in vain we laboured a recovery; principalities and powers were against us,—weakness and wretchedness on our side. Christ the Son of God took pity on us. Clad as a menial He stood between us and death. Yet, how frequently we bid Him stand by when He comes!”—(*Cf. Pulpit Illustrations.*)

*Unbelief unmans a man.*

“Take a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he is maintained by a man who is to him instead of a God, or at least *melior natura*; whereby it is manifest that the poor creature, without the confidence of a better nature than his own, could never be so courageous. Thus it is with man, when he rolleth himself upon God, and resteth on His divine perfection, then he gathers a force and ability which human nature itself could never attain; but when, with the fool, he says, there is “no God” [in other words, when he has lost all faith in God], then he destroys the nobility of man; for man



is akin to the beasts by his body; and if he is not akin to God by his soul, he is a base and ignoble creature. Atheism will unman any man, and deject anything that is the advantagement of human nature." — *Gabriel Inchinus*, quoted in *Things New and Old*.

Vers. 32-34. "He did not believe."  
... "God was angry." ... "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

"Of all the virgins presented to Ahasuerus none was so pleasing as Esther. "Let the maiden that *pleaseth* the king be queen instead of Vashti." When that decree was published, what strife, what emulation (may we think), was among the Persian damsels, that either were or thought themselves fair, every one hoped to be queen! But so incomparable was the beauty of that Jewess that she was not only taken into the Persian Court as one of the selected virgins, but had the most honourable place in all the seraglio allotted unto her. The other virgins pass their probation unregarded. When Esther's turn came, though she brought the same face and demeanour that nature had cast upon her, no eye saw her without admiration. The king was so delighted with her beauty, that, contemning all the other vulgar forms, his choice was fully fixed upon her. Thus *faith* is that Esther to which God holds out His golden sceptre. He is pleased with all graces: hot zeal and cool patience please Him; cheerful thankfulness and weeping repentance please Him; charity in the height, and humility in the dust, please Him; but none of them are welcome to Him without faith in Christ Jesus."

#### *Power of faith in the heart.*

"The philosopher, when he would persuade the king to settle his court and place of residence in the *heart* of his dominion, laid before him a bull's hide, ready tanned, upon which when he stood upon any one side of it, and so kept that down, the other side would rise up; when he removed to this side, that rose up and kept that down, then the side he came from would rise up; but when he stood in the middle he kept down all

alike." *Faith* is this king. When faith sits in the heart, then it keeps in check every passion—swamps every emotion—strengthens will—reins lust—in fine, cleaneth, invigorates, and rightens the whole man.

Ver. 33. We are told by a writer of world-wide fame, that a truly great man does not ask of another, is he great in some particular, but is *he* great? True *self-greatness* is a goal worthy of all. "Greater is he that ruleth himself than he that taketh a city." Ancient and modern concur. But a man is only great as he has divinity in his nature. Greatness of character is divinity humanised. And the man who is anything is what he is by the help of God. "By the grace of God I am what I am." He is the man who has God ever before him, and round about him, and behind, to open, prepare, and close the way. He has God as a light by night—a cloud by day. Eminently does the principle in the text work itself out in the Christian life. For—

I. The Christian is one pressing forward to the truest greatness man can know—the perfect man in Christ.

1. He is possessed of the faith that energises and supplies the weakest man with the grace that eventuates in success.

2. He shows the reality of his faith in his life by the manifestations of Christian character and disposition.

3. Such a life sheds so much light upon the path he has to travel, that in his heart is a perennial spring of hope.

II. Moses, as well as the apostle, recognises God as the source of all real strength and power in life.

1. By God's help they had overcome their foes.

2. God is with them in cloud and fire.

3. God would ultimately bring them into the promised land.

4. The result of life is not simply the product of natural causes. It is Christ that *lives within*; God who *works through* us.

III. The consciousness of this fact becomes an abiding help.

1. Natural energy is not *abiding*. We are liable to lose it any moment.

A fever robs the brain of knowledge. Heat impairs strength. The *flesh* has ever been felt to be an enemy of the spirit.

2. The grace of God is present in all changes. Paul felt it when the thorn pierced him; it was abundant in the prison, and burst forth as music in his heart; it nerved him in the presence of foes, judges, and even Cæsar. To individual Christians it is powerful to hold back from sin when tempted—restrains fear—aids in pressing forward.

“Went before us in the way.” (Compare vers. 30–33 with Ps. xli. 1–3.) Verse 1 of Ps. xli. might well be used as strophe, and verse 2 as antistrophe, of Moses’ song of his faith and triumph. Deal with the spiritual bearings of the text.

I. The circumambient God is to the Christian a refuge—strength—help.

1. God a refuge.

(a.) Refuge in the Mediator—Christ.

(b.) Refuge in the gospel of His love.

(c.) Refuge for eternity.

2. God as strength.

(a.) By His Spirit.

(b.) By promise and encouragement.

(c.) By means of grace.

3. God a help.

(a.) A Father to provide.

(b.) A searcher of life’s way.

II. The confidence of the believer in God as his Preparer and Provider.

1. God prepares the way.

2. God provides what is necessary.

3. *Past* supplies an earnest of *future*.

4. The sense of Providence strengthens.

Ver. 33. “*Night*.” Subjects in connection with night.

*Night* a revealer of God.

(a.) The day with its earthy light reveals the world.

(b.) The darkness of night shuts out the world.

(c.) The mind in its restlessness seeks other fields of knowledge.

(d.) In its reachings away from the world the heart has at times found its God.

The joys of night.

(a.) It brings sleep.

(b.) Sleep shuts out care.

(c.) Sorrow once removed by sleep has had a fang extracted.

Terrors of night. Songs of night. Night lost in day. (Cf. G. Gilfillan’s poem, “Night.”)

*Night*. “Night appears to be a time peculiarly favourable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars, looking down from heaven upon us, shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that indeed I could worship Him; for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest amid the stars, the worshippers and I myself joined in that silent song which they sang unto God: ‘Great art Thou, O God! great in Thy works. When I consider Thy heavens the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him! and the son of man that Thou visitest him!’ I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men, but there is a certain poet, whose character, perhaps, I could scarcely too much reprobate: a man very far from understanding true religion; one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel, a libertine of the worst order, and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems:—

‘Tis midnight on the mountains brown,  
The cold round moon shines deeply down;  
Blue rolls the waters, blue the sky  
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,  
Bespangled with those isles of light,  
So wildly, spiritually bright;  
Who ever gazed upon them shining,  
And turned to earth without repining,  
Nor wished for wings to flee away,  
And mix with their eternal ray.’

“Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the

grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, 'I have thought upon Thee continually; I have mused upon Thy name in the night watches, and with desire have I desired Thee in the night.'"

—*Spurgeon.*

**Vers. 34–39.** The good among the evil.

I. True goodness can exist amid circumstances most corrupt (*cf.* the case of the son of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiv. 13). Sardis was one of the most dissolute cities of antiquity; but *here* were Christians (Rev. iii. 4).

"They say that lilies, or roses, or such like pleasant flowers, if they be planted by garlic or onions, or such like unsavoury things, they do not lose but rather increase in their former sweetness. So it is with good and godly men when they are planted, and as it were hemmed in with wicked men, the vileness and odiousness of their wickedness makes them to loathe wickedness so much the more, and to love godliness, and to bless God that hath kept them, that they have not run to the same excess of riot."—*Things New and Old.*

II. True goodness will ultimately be distinguished by a glorious reward. Caleb and Joshua were true to the good spirit within. They wrought righteousness. The reward came. Caleb entered the promised land; Joshua became the people's leader.

(a.) It has its reward here in its influence over others. Justin Martyr confesses that he left philosophy and became a Christian, through the admiration that he had for the innocent and holy lives of Christians.

(b.) It has a reward in the blessedness it brings to the man himself.

**Ver. 34.** "The Lord heard . . . was wroth."

God hears. He judges. Judgment comes quick and sure at times. Some indifferent to it. Some disbelieve. God hears and is angry.

I. The anger of the Lord is moved by the wickedness of man. He is not indifferent to it.

II. That the Day of Judgment will come to all.

III. Let men prepare for this Day of Judgment, lest it be a day of wrath.

**Ver. 34.** "The Lord heard . . . was angry."

Three homiletic points—

I. The principle of discernment is ever operative in the Divine economy. God heard the voice of murmur and was angry.

II. Escape from this principle impossible. God is omniscient. He sees all; hears all; knows all.

III. Those who comply with the will of God have nothing to fear from this principle. There is rather a cause of joy. God knows your toils—sorrows—difficulties. He watches with pleasure every conquest.

"The Lord heard." The omniscience of God; but God is omniscient because omnipresent. "We feel conscious that there is no place in heaven above, or on earth beneath, from whence God is excluded: we feel conscious that in the deepest vale, as well as on the mountain top; in subterranean caverns, as well as open plains; when surrounded by the darkness of midnight, as well as the splendour of noon-day, He is around us and knows us: we feel conscious that if we could transport ourselves with the rapidity of lightning from our present local habitation to the extreme verge of the habitable globe, that we should not be able to light on a single spot, and take our stand and say, 'Here, His eye shall not see us; here, His ear shall not hear us; here, His justice cannot overtake us; here, His grace cannot save us.'"—*East.*

"In every part and place of the universe we perceive the exertions of a power which we believe to proceed from the Deity. In what part or point of space that has ever been explored do we not discover attractions? In what region do we not find light? What kingdom is there of nature, what corner of space, in which there is anything that can be examined by us, while we do not fall upon contrivance or design? An



agency so general as that we cannot discover its absence, or assign the place in some effects of its continued energy is not found, must be ascribed to a being who is omnipresent. He who upholds all things by His power, may be said to be everywhere present.”—*Paley*.

“Is there no necessity of control over the powers of the atmosphere, or of the ocean? What would be the situation of the inhabitants of our world, if exposed to their resistless force, in the entire absence of the control of a presiding mind—a guardian Deity? Think of the innumerable processes which are incessantly going forward in the life and growth of animals and of vegetables, and can you imagine these to proceed with undeviating uniformity, without infinite knowledge to direct infinite power? Conceive, then, of the Divine omniscience as necessarily commensurate with the exertions of omnipotence, and the extent of omnipresence.”—*Burder*.

Vers. 34–41. Sin and its recompense.

“The tale of the Goblet, which the genius of a heathen fashioned, was true, and taught a moral of which many a death-bed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup. Coiled for a spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath ruby wine. Nor did he who raised that golden cup to quench his thirst and quaff the delicious draught suspect what lay below, till, as he reached the dregs, that dreadful head arose and glistened before his eyes. So, when life’s cup is nearly emptied, and sin’s last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs, shall rise ghastly terrors of remorse, and death, and judgment upon the despairing soul.”—*Guthrie*.

Ver. 36. “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh.” Subject: The reward of righteousness.

Caleb, in conjunction with the other eleven spies, had important work entrusted to him. He and Joshua alone were brave and righteous in the conduct of their services. God was angry with

the wrong-doers, and punished them: with Caleb and Joshua He was pleased, and them He rewarded. Caleb was allowed to enter the promised land, where he subsequently obtained good possessions.

I. The reward of the righteous in the case of all is inexpressibly great. “Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (2 Chron. xv. 7). “Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight (Ps. xviii. 24). “Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren, &c., . . . shall receive an hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life” (Matt. xix. 29; cf. Mark x. 29, 30, and note variations).

II. The reward of righteousness is invariably obtained in connection with labour. (Cf. “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” Matt. xx. 6, with “Call the labourers, and give them their hire,” xx. 8). Work is God’s condition of prosperity. Labour enhances the enjoyment of life. Indolence brings ruin to individuals and states; to the body, intellect, spirit. The men who will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment will not be those whose religion consisted in hearing sermons, seeking comfort, uttering sentimental sympathies and offering prayers; but those who make all “means of grace” to be channels for carrying into reality and life the purposes God has inspired in the heart.

Ver. 37. “Lord angry with me,” &c. “So aggravated was your guilt that it not only brought ruin on yourselves, but displeasure on your leader.”—*Clapham*.

Cf. Achan’s sin (Josh. vii. 15, 24, 25). His family was involved with him in his punishment. “Sins of fathers visited on the children,” &c.

“The Lord angry with me.” Some thing very pathetic and touching in these words. The old lawgiver, we could imagine, would look back over his long life—that life so full of vicissitude; which, though so long and eventful, was yet incomplete; for the people were still in the desert. Another must

lead them into the promised land. But amid the clouds of sadness three gleams of light may be discerned—

I. Life is ending in the midst of labour.

II. Life is ending in the midst of prospect.

III. Life is ending in the midst of strength.

“For *your* sakes.” “Here we see, as it were, the *other* side of the event narrated in Num. xx. 10. *There* the unbelief of Moses and Aaron bears the blame; yet the unbelief was called forth by the invincible perverseness of the people. Moses, therefore, was punished because he had not kept himself entirely free from the infection of the sin of the people, but the people had reason to reckon their sin on the part of Moses as occasioned by their fault.”—*Gerlach*.

Ver. 37. “The Lord was angry with *me* for *your* sakes.” This, read in conjunction with Isaiah liii. 5, brings before our notice one of the most startling facts in the whole universe of being;—the fact and principle of vicarious suffering (*cf.* John xi. 49–52). Men may think the idea of vicarious sacrifice inconsistent with Divine perfection, but there is the *fact*. In standing on the platform which accepts this idea, we are not compelled to satisfy all the scruples of those standing on a platform advocating a theory in opposition as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of any act of God. Sufficient for man, if God do it. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Man is a fraction of a whole, as well as an unit. Shall the head complain because when one with the hand it suffers? It is one with it in joy! True wisdom is to know that this principle works in human life, and to make the best of the knowledge.

1. The vicarious principle is a law of physical life.

1. The mineral kingdom is food for the vegetable.

2. The vegetable supports the animal.

3. The herbivorous food for the car-

nivorous. This not an effect of sin. (*Cf.* the teachings of geology.)

4. All fall before the rule of man. These each provide nourishments for his body whereon his mind and soul live.

II. The vicarious principle a law of intellectual life—

1. The enjoyment and instruction of the reader is only attained at the price of the author's suffering and experience.

2. The congregation's repast on the Sabbath is at the cost of the preacher's brain and life and suffering.

3. The civilisation of to-day is obtained by the labour and peril of the past.

4. The position, gain, education, &c., of the child is at the price of the parents' toil or self-denial.

III. This vicarious principle also a law of spiritual life—

1. By sympathy we take some of the sorrow out of another heart into our own, and thereby afford relief.

2. Seeing that the principle is both in the regions of the material and the mental, the gospel makes no greater claim upon our faith when it asks us to believe that such a principle is active in the region of the spiritual also.

*God can be provoked to anger.*—“The gods of the Gentiles were senseless stocks and stones, not able to apprehend, much less to revenge an injury done unto them. Well, therefore, might the philosopher be bold with Hercules, to put him to his thirteenth labour, in seething of his dinner; and Martial with Priapus, in threatening to throw him into the fire, if he looked not well to his trees. A child may play at the hole of a dead asp, and a silly woman may strike a dead lion; but who dare play with a living serpent? Who dare take a roaring lion by the beard? Let Christians take heed how they provoke the living God, for He is a consuming fire, and with the breath of His mouth He is able to throw down the whole frame of nature, and destroy all creatures from the face of the earth.”—*Things New and Old*.

*A good prince no advantage to a bad people.*—"We see that, though the sun be above the horizon, and so apt to make a glorious day, yet many fogs and mists arising from the earth, overcast the sky, and intercept the comfortable influence of the light. Even so, though God vouchsafe never so good a prince, a prince under whom the people enjoy abundance of peace, and the free passage of the gospel, such may be their gracelessness that they may be the better for neither of them."—*Things New and Old.*

Ver. 38. "But Joshua, &c. . . . he shall cause Israel to inherit."

Joshua had done *one* thing well that God had given him; work of a higher order is therefore intrusted to him. His conduct in spying the land was good: he is to complete his first duty, spying, by leading the people into possessing the land. The five *talents* faithfully used prepares the way for the rule of five *cities*.

Here we have an illustration of service for God being rewarded. Two considerations—

I. The reasonableness of service for God.

II. The reward of such service.

I. The reasonableness of service for God.

1. In every state of life the condition of true honour is faithful service. True honour is not a matter of birth or place. It is had only by becoming honourable, by submitting to service, toil, self-sacrifice. The man ambitious to be erudite must toil through the drudgery of the preliminary work: the chemist in the laboratory; the soldier in drill-room and battle-field; statesman in cabinet. Men will not suffer others to label themselves gold if only brass.

2. In proportion to the greatness of the honour is the rigidity of the condition.

3. If we seek honour of God, it is but reasonable that we should be prepared with service of some kind; and the higher the honour we crave from Christ, the more devoted must we be to Him and to His service. To sit on His right hand

and on His left is only for those worthy of it (*cf.* Matt. xx. 23).

II. The reward of such service.

1. The reward will be proportionate, not only to the worth of the servant, but to the greatness of the giver. Kings bestow royal gifts (*cf.* Ahasuerus and Mordecai). "What shall be done unto the man whom *the king* delighteth to honour?"

2. The reward will be somewhat of the nature of the receiver's worth. Joshua's service was fidelity to his nation: his reward was a national honour: he was made a chief. The Christian's service is fidelity to Christ; his reward, therefore, will be the honour of the crowned Christ in the Day of Triumph.

Ver. 38. "Thou shalt not go in thither." In other words, "Thou shalt die in the desert." These words must have fallen on Moses as one of those thunder-claps of unexpectedness that are made the more powerful by their rarity; but which no one is anxious to make more familiar by repetition. The people were soon to enter the promised land; therefore Moses knew that he was soon to die. The subject pressed on our attention is the imminence of death. Death may be impending physically, morally, socially, influentially.

Physically: Breath is in the nostrils, but we know not the hair-breadth escapes from death. A needle point might destroy the life of the body.

Morally: Character may be ruined in a moment. One sin broke up human history into ruin, sorrow, &c.

Socially: When character is ruined society is closed against a man.

Influentially: A man's influence should be the measure of his moral standing. By one false step influence may be impaired or even destroyed. Since death is so near, and in so many ways imminent, the following considerations may not be ill-timed:—

I. High significance and value should be given to time. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. What is life? A brief day, a solemn destiny. Eternity turns upon the present. Direction is now given for all the future.



II. The most anxious vigilance should be aroused. When death is near, it is only a *step* (1 Sam. xx. 3), and might be the *next*! "Be sober, be vigilant."

III. The thought of death should stimulate to preparedness for the future. The most careless make some preparation for the immediate wants of the present and the future. The appetites and body are provided for. Death thunders out, "The spirit must be provided for." The soul's preparation is made by our sustaining each day a right relation to Him, into whose presence death ushers us.

IV. It should inspire a tender interest into life and all its relationships. We hold our blessings for but a moment, then they are gone. Home, friendship, Christian service—they are soon enfolded in a pall. Life is too short for man to be hard on man. Those with us are soon gone. An eternity of tears will not wash out one act of cruelty.

V. The prospect of death should lead to a right use of temporal possessions. There is only one world in which we have money. We touch it only *once*. We can hoard it for selfish uses: we can spend it in the service of Christ.

"Ah! in what perils is vain life engaged!  
What slight neglects, what trivial faults  
destroy  
The hardest frame! Of indolence, of toil  
We die; of want, of superfluity.  
The all-surrounding heaven, the vital air,  
Is big with death."

"*Death.*—Death is, in itself, a most serious and distressing event. It is nature's supreme evil, the abhorrence of God's creation—a monster, from whose touch every living thing recoils; so that to shrink from its ravages upon ourselves, or upon those whom we love, is not an argument of weakness, but an act of obedience to the first law of being—a tribute to the value of that life which is our Maker's gift. The disregard which some of old affected to whatever goes by the name of evil; the insensibility of others, who yielded up their souls to the power of fatalism; and the artificial gaiety, which has occasionally played the comedian about the dying bed of 'philosophy, falsely so called,' are outrages upon decency and nature.

Death destroys both action and enjoyment—mocks at wisdom, strength, and beauty—disarranges our plans—robs us of our treasure—desolates our bosoms—breaks our heartstrings—blasts our hopes. Death extinguishes the glow of kindness—abolishes the most tender relations of man—severs him from all that he knows and loves—subjects him to an ordeal which thousands of millions have passed, but none can explain; and what will be as new to the last, who gives up the ghost, as it was to murdered Abel,—flings him, in fine, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. No wonder that nature trembles before it; reason justifies the fear; religion never makes light of it; and he who does, instead of ranking with heroes, can hardly deserve to rank with a brute."—*Mason*.

Ver. 39. "Moreover your little ones . . . they shall go in thither," &c.

A beautiful example of the children bringing honour to the parent. The fathers by their sin brought disgrace upon their name. They die in the desert. *The children enter the promised land.*

A very striking illustration of this is found in the reward of the oaken crown among the ancient Romans. The civic crown was the foundation of many privileges. He who had once obtained it, had a right to wear it always. When he appeared at the public spectacles, the senators rose up to do him honour. *He was placed near their bench; and his father, and his grandfather by the father's side, were entitled to the same privilege.*

Ver. 38. Joshua became heir to the title and position of Moses, in preference even to his own children, if he had any now living. (*Cf.* this with what Plutarch tells us. "It was customary with the Romans of that age (the time of Coriolanus), when they were drawn up in order of battle, and ready to take up their shields and gird their garments about them, to make a nuncupative will, naming each his heir, in the presence of three or four witnesses.")

Ver. 41. "We have sinned."  
Thence: conscience conqueror.

(We supplement the Hints of the preceding Writer on CHAP. I. 1-38.)

### REVIEW OF THE PAST.—Verses 1-5.

"Live on the past," said Napoleon; but the past of his life afforded little help to him. Moses here reviews the past history of Israel in its remarkable places and conflicts—repeats, explains, and enforces the commands of God, and reminds them of God's mercy to prompt them to duty.

**I. It is helpful to review the past.** The lessons of the past are gathered not into oblivion, but to be fruitful in the present and the future. The histories and events of former times confirm our faith, and encourage us to hope and trust in God. 1. *In remarkable places.* In the *wilderness*, amid dearth, distress, and poverty. In the *plain*, well watered and cultivated spots of encampment. Against the *Red Sea*, amid wonders of God's presence and power which should never be forgotten. Life's journey not all a barren desert;—there are many beautiful scenes and fruitful seasons, many deliverances from enemies, and many displays of Divine favour. 2. *In remarkable times.* (a) *After long delays.* "In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month," after deliverance from Egypt. The delay through sin, which brings trouble and unfitness for duty. (b) *After conflicts and trials.* Sihon slain in opposing their onward march (Num. xxi. 24; Deut. ii. 32). Og, king of Bashan, without provocation rushed to attack, and was defeated. By the destruction of these kings God pledges to help his people, puts them under deep obligation to obey, and encourages them to further effort.

**II. It is needful to review the past.** From the past we must get our examples, precedents, and principles. The past alone will interpret the present, and we cannot get rid of its influences and results. 1. *Our mental condition makes it needful.* The generation that came out of Egypt had died. There were many children in Israel who only knew a little of God's law and dealings with them. Hence the need of repetition. We are children mentally and morally. God teaches by past history. "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept," etc. (Isaiah xxviii. 10). 2. *Our present surroundings make it needful.* Israel was surrounded by idolatrous nations, and would be exposed to seductive influences in the land of Canaan. We have need to be warned against worldly customs and sin's devices—to have the law of God written in our hearts (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20). 3. *Our immediate future makes it needful.* Israel was about to go into new circumstances of life; to become soldiers, and to cease to be pilgrims. Their strength was to rely upon God and follow him. What He had done in the past He could do in the future. He will pardon sin, deliver from danger, and give rest and rewards.

### THE ENFORCEMENT OF DUTY.—Verses 5-8.

Long enough had the Israelites remained at Horeb. The end was accomplished for which they were led thither. Their work was not yet finished; the land was not possessed, hence the command, "take your journey and go." Duty should be the end and aim of the highest life. The greatest pleasure is derived from a consciousness of its fulfilment. It has sustaining power in life, and at life's end, says George Herbert, it "gives music at midnight."

**I. Duty explained.** Moses began to *declare, i.e.,* to explain. We must know before we can act. God has not left us to grope or guess our way in the dark. In the Bible we have a full revelation of God's will and the path of duty opened so plainly that "wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein." Nature and Philosophy are dim lights. Here we have the light of life, the true light which shineth unto every man coming into the world.

**II. Duty enforced.** When we know, we are reluctant to do the right. We all know more than we practice, and have need of the enforcement of duty by every possible motive. 1. *By present needs.* Long enough at rest, now rouse yourselves to work. We have not to serve God in retirement, but in publicity. Peter was not permitted to dwell on the mount, but sent to confess and serve Christ among men. Israel had now received the Covenant, been trained for a new social position, and they must go to their lawful sphere to adorn their privileges. 2. *By removing hindrances to its performance.* The land before you, *lit.,* before your faces. It is accessible; you can see it, and there is no difficulty in the way, but which you may easily overcome. The promise and the kindness of God should be enough to stir us up. 3. *By the express command of God.* The land was given to their fathers by promise. They were now trained for it, and should no longer delay in taking it. "Go in and possess the land."

#### THE CHOICE OF OFFICERS.—Verses 9-18.

Israel had now greatly increased, and Moses felt the affairs too heavy for him to bear alone. He appeals to them as if in a dying wish to select men to help him to judge and act as public officers. The rules for the choice, and the instructions as to method, are worthy of the most enlightened ages of Christendom.

**I. The qualifications which they are to possess.** This is most important, every man is not fit to be a magistrate. Jethro knew this and gave a four-fold qualification. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Ex. xviii. 21). These officers were to be—1. *Men of intelligence.* "Wise men and understanding"—men of skill and tact. Administration without wisdom will not be successful. Unskilful men holding the reigns of government may be like Phæton, the son of Sol, who insisted on driving the fiery steeds and sent horses and chariot spinning through boundless space. 2. *Men of good repute.* "Known among your tribes,"—men who had gained a reputation for honesty and straight-forwardness in daily life. 3. *Men who fear God.* Those who act for God should not only have the confidence of the people, but the Spirit of God in them. "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

**II. The Spirit in which they are to act.** The rules applicable at first to the law of Moses, are in spirit and letter fitted to guide all human judgments. 1. *To hear patiently.* "Hear the causes." How many hasty, impulsive judgments are given without a patient candid hearing? "Judge not according to appearance, but righteous judgment." 2. *To judge impartially.* No respect of persons in judgment. The great and the small, the orphan and friendless, the weak and the powerful, were to be treated in justice and equity. 3. *To act fearlessly.* "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." Lack of courage leads to perversion of justice. "There lies one who never feared the face of man" was the eulogy on Knox, the reformer. 4. *To act under a sense of responsibility to God.* "The judgment is God's." Judges were holy persons, sitting in the place of God and exalted to dispense the power of God. "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment" (2 Chron. xix. 6).



**III. The method in which they are installed.** The people approved of the suggestion, and acted upon it. "The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do." 1. *They were chosen by the people.* "Take you" (ver. 13). Many say that it is dangerous to extend the sufferage—to invest power into the hands of the people. But neither the Jewish polity nor the Christian Church teaches us to ignore them. (*cf.* Acts vi. 1-4.) 2. *They were appointed by Moses.* "I will make them rulers over you." All scribes, superintendents, and chiefs were instituted by him. Moses ratified the people's choice. 3. *They were confirmed by the Spirit of God.* The judgment was God's. The judges were not only respected by the people, but aided by the Spirit of God. "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee." (Num. xi. 17.)

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 3, 4. Remarkable times and places.**

1. Reminding of past transgressions. 2. Indicating noble achievements. Sihon and Og slain. Great cities taken (Num. xxi. 33). "Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings" (Ps. cxxxv. 10, 11). 3. Stimulating to noble efforts. Og, a giant, friend, and ally to Sihon. Edrei, the second capital of Og, strongly fortified, yet notwithstanding artificial defence, natural advantage, and military prowess, taken by Israel (Deut. iii. 1). "Through God we shall do valiantly."

**Ver. 6. Long enough.** Needless delay. 1. In the world away from God. The place of sin, Satan's service and misery. Why remain here? God invites, urges you to come to Him. 2. In spiritual bondage and perplexity. Many distressed in mind, in terror and bondage, under the mount, like Bunyan's pilgrim. Christ gives liberty. 3. In present position and attainments.

Many children in knowledge, when they ought to be advanced, mature and fit to teach. Long enough in idleness and present position. Go on.

**Vers. 10, 11. Spiritual increase and prosperity.** 1. Spiritual prosperity the gift of God. God hath multiplied you—therefore fulfilled His promise, displayed His power and grace. 2. Spiritual prosperity promised by God. "As He hath promised you." 3. Spiritual prosperity should be sought. "The Lord make you a thousand times more."

**Vers. 9-13. Ministerial and lay agency in the Christian Church.** *cf.* Jethro's advice to Moses (Ex. xviii. 19-23). 1. Lay agency needful. Ministers "not able" to overtake the work. 2. Lay agency advantageous. It relieves from "burden," "cumbrance;" facilitates business and promotes order. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates," etc. (Deut. xvi. 18).

THE HEAVENLY PROPOSAL.—*Verse 21.*

We may transfer what is here said to the Jews to ourselves. Canaan was typical of a better country—a heavenly.

**Observe the Exhibition.** "Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee." Where? In the Scriptures: not in full developement, for it is a glory to be revealed, but in its general nature, and in a way adapted to our present apprehensions, and likely to take hold of our mind. Hence many figures are employed, all of which aid our conceptions, while they fall short of the subject.

But does God place it before our eyes to tantalize us by awakening notice, drawing forth admiration, and exciting desire when the boon is not within our reach?

Observe *the command*. "Go up and possess it as the Lord God of thy fathers said unto thee." This supposes it to be attainable: yea it makes the attainment our duty. Missing it is not only misery, but crime. We shall be punished for neglecting so great salvation. It is our guilt—the guilt of the vilest disobedience to the most gracious authority; for he not only allows, but enjoins us to seek first his kingdom and righteousness—and commands us to believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ. Are we doing *this*? For *He* is the way, and we come unto God by Him.

Observe *the encouragement*: "Fear not, neither be discouraged." To this we are liable on two accounts. *First*, by a sense of our unworthiness. The greatness of the blessedness, combined with a sense of our desert, astonishes the mind, and makes hope seem like presumption. But everything is free, and designed to show the exceeding riches of His grace. We are as welcome as we are unworthy, why, then, refuse to be comforted? *Secondly*, by a sense of our weakness. Who is sufficient for the distance, the difficulties, and the dangers? The Jews were dismayed at the report of the spies. The towns were walled up to heaven. Before the Anakims *we* are but as grasshoppers. The people were disheartened, but said Caleb, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are able." How did he mean? Without God? No. But with Him as their leader and keeper—and this He had promised. Has He not said to you, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will keep thee." We cannot be too sensible of our weakness; but let us remember that His grace is sufficient for us. It has been sufficient for all gone before us. Jordan rolled between the Jews. It was overflowing its bank at the time. But the ark divided the waters. They went through dry shod, and their enemies were still as a stone till they were clean passed over.—*From Jay.*

#### THE NATURE OF UNBELIEF.—Verses 22–40.

It was through obedience to God that Canaan was to be inherited. But many times in their journey did Israel rebel. Moses recapitulates, but specially mentions the open rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, for which they were doomed to wander and die in the wilderness. When they had come to the very borders they hesitated in unbelief—proposed that men should survey the land and report. Moses approved and God permitted a step which shows the sinful nature and the terrible consequences of unbelief. The nature of unbelief is seen.

**I. In contriving what is unneedful.** Why send spies when they were about to enter the land? Why rely upon their own devices when God had helped them all through their journey? Why glance too much into the future, instead of acting in present duty? "If you constantly make the best use of the present hour, you are sure to be prepared for those which follow," says Fenelon.

**II. In relying more upon numbers than upon evidence.** All brought the fruit of the land. But the people believed the report of the ten and not the two, and cried in outrageous rebellion "Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt (Neh. ix. 17). "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

**III. In misinterpreting the Providence of God.** "Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt." O, what perversion of God's dealings! Had God forgotten His word? Did He wish to "destroy" and not to bless them? But when we measure God according to our narrow views, and read His ways with an unbelieving heart, we are sure to err and make invidious reflections upon his love.

**IV. In blinding against the help of God.** Moses exhorted them not to be afraid, for God was with them and would fight for them. All was in vain (vers. 29, 30). Rebellion blinds the mind, and we can neither discern God in the past nor present. Let us not blame the Jews. We are weak in faith, and full of prudent inventions in personal and social affairs. We "trust God when we can trace him"—take one-sided views, and reproach God with ungrateful conduct.

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF.—*Verses 26-40.*

God had sustained and guarded His people in the greatest difficulties. He was continually with them, but unbelief was followed by open rebellion, and the Israelites were, in the righteous judgment of God, doomed to die in the wilderness. The consequences of unbelief may be seen in its different steps of development.

**I. It creates positive disobedience to God.** "In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." Alienation of heart from God, leads to doubt and distrust and if we have no love, no faith in God, how can we obey Him? We have; within us a sinful, faithless heart, "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

**II It leads to open rebellion against God.** Unbelief broke forth into murmuring and open disorder. They cast reproach and dishonor upon God. Unbelief perverts the truth of God, defies the authority of God and despises the threatening of God. "They were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs."

**III. It rouses the anger of God.** "The Lord was angry." Notwithstanding His great love, God displayed His righteous retribution. Our fellow creatures will defend their honour, human government will uphold their authority, so God must punish sin. "How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness and grieve Him in the desert?"

**IV. It excludes from the inheritance of God.** That unbelieving generation with two exceptions, were excluded from Canaan. God swore in his wrath, and the decision could not be overturned. "They shall not enter into My rest." Those who disobey and persist in their folly will be excluded from heaven. "Let us therefore fear" (Heb. iv. 1).

### ENCOURAGEMENT.—*Verse 38.*

Joshua was appointed to succeed Moses, and lead Israel into Canaan (*cf.* Num. xxvii. 15-23). His work was difficult, and he would need help and encouragement. The people are exhorted to strengthen and obey him.

**I. The text supposes that difficulties will be encountered.** In the Christian life there are many obstacles. 1. *Difficulties made by ourselves.* How numerous these are. 2. *Difficulties arising from the conduct of others.* 3. *Difficulties expressly sent by God to test His servants.*

**II. The text gives a command to surmount these difficulties.** "Encourage him." We should encourage our fellow Christians. 1. *To meet their trials with patience.* 2. *Steadily to fight till they conquer them.* 3. *To profit by them.*

**III. The text contains a lesson for every Christian preacher and teacher.** "Encourage"—1. *The penitent sinner.* 2. *The young believer.* 3. *The well-tried saint.*—Adapted from J. W. Macdonald.



COMING NEAR YET FALLING SHORT.—*Verses 41-46.*

Israel had left Egypt, endured toil and privation in the wilderness, and were now on the threshold of the inheritance, but failed in duty, and were driven back into the desert to weep in vain. Their opportunity was lost, and their daring presumption ended in sad disgrace. We have here—

**I. Confession without true penitence.** “We have sinned against the Lord.” Their sorrow was not sincere. It arose not from a sense of guilt, but from the difficulties and dangers into which they were involved. The grief of Judas not of Peter. There may be confession of folly without true penitence; resolution to amend without renewal of heart. Repentance often comes too late, and avails nothing in the sight of God.

**II. Presumption in the garb of zeal.** Grieved at the prospect before them, yet still rebellious and self-willed, they determine to “go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us.” What professed regard to God, when all the time they acted with levity. “They presumed to go up” (Num. xiv. 44). Their zeal sprang from a wrong feeling, was based on a wrong principle, and led to disastrous results. “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

**III. Effort without Divine help.** In spite of warning, and in direct opposition to God’s command they went up, but were driven before the enemy, who chased and slew them with the ferocity of furious bees disturbed in the hive. Rashness is not reliance upon God. All undertakings in defiance of God’s will—all efforts without God’s help will fail. Every godless endeavour, every opposition to His authority, will bring displeasure upon those who persist. Those who run without being sent, those who fight without Divine commission will meet with awful defeat. Beware, “lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 19-21. *The way to rest.*** 1. Through the wilderness, in trial, affliction, and discipline, reminding of God’s goodness and human ingratitude. (a). Courageously travelled. (b). Under Divine guidance. 2. By Divine command. God teaches, leads, and helps. “God commanded us.”

**Vers. 29-31. *The confidence of faith.*** 1. Based on past experience. (a). Of God’s help. “According to all that He did for you in Egypt.” (b). Of God’s goodness. “The Lord thy God bare thee.” 2. Assured of safety for the future. “Dread not, neither be afraid.”

**Vers. 32, 33. *God a Pioneer,*** going before us in life. 1. To appoint a locality for residence. As he searched out the land of Canaan, so now He fixes “the bounds of habitation” (Acts

xvii. 26). 2. To appoint a place of usefulness. “I have chosen you and ordained you” (*lit.* put you, set you in your sphere). John xv. 16. 3. To arrange events in life. “Hath determined the times before appointed (arranged beforehand).” Acts xvii. 26.

**Vers. 34-38. *The faithful two.*** 1. Distinguished in their conduct. Faithful, fearless, and Godlike. Caleb “followed the Lord wholly” (*cf.* Num. xiv. 24). Joshua firm and true amid general defection. “We must, in a course of obedience to God’s will, and of service to His honour,” says Matthew Henry, “follow Him *universally*, without dividing; *uprightly*, without dissembling; *cheerfully*, without disputing; and *constantly*, without declining; and this is following the Lord fully.” 2. Distinguished in their rewards. Caleb in the ranks of the people was spared to

enter the land which his seed possessed (*cf.* Num. xiv. 2). Joshua, a servant of Moses, was chosen to succeed him and lead Israel into Canaan. "Many are called, but few chosen."

Ver. 39. *Little ones cared for.* 1. Delivered from anticipated evils. "Which ye said should be a prey." 2. Rewarded with unexpected good. "They shall go in thither."

Vers. 40-42. *The battle is the Lord's*

1. Then do not fight without his presence. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." 2. Do not enlist without his call. "Lo, we be here and will go up;" but God had not called them there. God had said, "go not up, neither fight, for I am not among you." 3. To rush into any undertaking without God will end in defeat. Presumption is not faith, resistance to God is open defiance of His providence and will. "Woe unto him that striveth with his maker."

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I.

Ver. 41. *We have sinned.* See how the works of darkness must needs come to light. God will have sinners to be their own detectors. The inward evidence of guilty conscience shall not suffice; their tongue shall tell it out, and, *ex ore tuo*, their own mouths shall sentence them. (*Dr. Richard Clarke.*) *Presumption.*—*We will go up.* For a creature to oppose is for briars and thorns to do battle against fire. Pharaoh never appeared nearer his object than when he met with destruction.—*Robinson.*

Ver. 43. *Rebelled.* Sin against God,

as He is *Almighty*, is the excess of madness and folly; but as He is most *kind and merciful*, it is the basest ingratitude. The greater His goodness, the greater is our guilt if we be undutiful servants, and the greater will be our punishment.—*Jortin.*

Ver. 46. *Abode many days.* All attempts to urge men forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of their light, are impracticable, and unlawful if they were practicable; augment their light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of their own accord.—*Robert Hall.*

## CHAPTER II.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—1. The story continued. After the unsuccessful attack, Israel broke up encampment at Kadesh. Many days. *i.e.*, many years in a nomadic life, wandering in various directions from place to place, according to pasturage and water. Details are not mentioned, because not required.

2. This command relates to the journey from Kadesh to Mount Hor (Num. xx. 22; xxxiii. 37), and directs their march round the south extremity of Mount Seir, so as to "compass the land of Edom" (Jud. xi. 18; Num. xxi. 4), and so northwards towards the Arnon, *i.e.*, "by the way of the wilderness of Moab" (ver. 8). This circuitous path was followed because of the refusal of the Edomites to allow the people to pass through their territory" (*Speak. Com.*).

4. *Afraid.* They repelled approach from western frontier; now they fear Israel coming round on the weak side (Ex. xv. 15).

5. *Meddle not, lit.*, excite not yourselves against them. They were not to war, nor injure them in property nor persons. Originally the relation between the two people was fraternal, and God had granted Mount Seir to Esau.

6. *Buy water, lit.*, dig water; perhaps purchased permission to dig wells for water.

7. *Blessed thee.* Israel had means to buy provisions, and should not therefore be guilty of fraud or violence.

8. Elath (tress.), *cf.*, 1 Kings ix. 26, now called Akaba, on the route of annual pilgrimage from Cairo to Mecca. Ez-gaber, *cf.* Num. xxxiii. 35 (backbone of a man; so called, probably, from rugged rocks in its vicinity). A seaport near Elath, *cf.* 1 Kings ix. 26; 2 Chron. xx. 36.

9. Moabites and Ammonites (ver. 19) descended from Lot, and like Edomites, kinsmen of Israelites.

10-12. Ethnographical notices concerning earlier inhabitants of these lands. Emim, *i.e.*, frightful, terrible to the Moabites. Anakim, *cf.* Num. xiii. 32. Horims, Gen. xiv. 5.

13. Connected with ver. 9. Zered, the boundary line between Edom and Moab, crossed thirty-eight years after the doom pronounced upon them at Kadesh.

14. Sware, Num. xiv. 28, 29.

15. Destroy not by natural causes, but by terrors (Ex. xiv. 24) and judgments (Num. xvi. 35; xvii. 14).

16-19. Advance into the country of Moabites, but Israel not to meddle with them, for God would give them nothing of their land.

20-22. For confirmation, ethnographical notices introduced again. Zam, from *zamam*, to hum, a humming or roaring people; probably the *Zuzim* (Gen. xiv. 5).

23. Avims, the Avites (Josh. xiii. 3), possibly connected with Ava, 2 Kings xvii. 24 (*Speak. Com.*)

24. Command to possess the land of Sihon.

25. Be in anguish, *lit.*, writhe in pain (Is. xiii. 8).

26-29. Moses sent a peaceful messenger, to prove to the Amorites that they brought punishment upon themselves.

30. Hardened, *lit.*, sharpened his heart by keen resolution. No direct influence from God imparted. Sihon was permitted like Pharaoh to pursue his own course.

32-7. *cf.* Num. xxi. 23-26. "A war of extermination, in which all towns were laid under the ban (see Lev. xxvii. 29), *i.e.*, the whole of the population of men, women, and children, were put to death, and only the flocks and herds and material possessions were taken by the conquerors as prey."—*Keil*.

### TURNED BACK AND DELAYED.—Verses 1-3.

In this chapter Moses reviews the history of Israel, and narrates the journey from Kadesh to the frontier of the Amorites. He is silent about many things, but glances at God's goodness to the end of their wandering. Israel had been turned back, and entrance into Canaan delayed.

I. God's purpose is sometimes delayed in its fulfilment. God had purposed and promised that the land should be given to Israel, but they had come short of it. Their unbelief and rebellion had delayed the fulfilment of this design. Thus by our sins we may be driven away from our destiny, and hinder the work of God. "Ye shall know my breach (*lit.*, removal, withholding) of promise." (Num. xiv. 34.)

II. Human discipline is secured by this delay. We cannot always see what ends God has in view, but he brings good out of evil, and light from darkness. Two things we learn from this delay. 1. *Israel was prepared for the inheritance.* Men are often unfit for duty and destiny. Hasty preparation will be a curse and not a blessing. In the wilderness Israel was organised into a nation, received laws and learned obedience. Solitude, delay, and affliction are salutary, and discipline for life's end and reward. "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." 2. *The Canaanites had forfeited the inheritance.* Their opportunities were almost gone, and their day of grace over. They had ripened themselves for their doom. No overtures of peace were offered them. Their land was taken from them, and as an absolute sovereign gift bestowed upon Israel. Solemn thought, men may sin away their day of salvation. (Lev. xix. 42.)



**III.** When men are prepared by discipline, God's purpose is realised through them. God's design is not forgotten nor frustrated, though often delayed. If some do not, others are taught to accomplish it. David may not, but Solomon builds a house for God. God's purposes comprehend all agencies and all events. Change of method does not indicate change of design. "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him."

**ISRAEL'S CHARGE CONCERNING ESAU AND MOAB.—Verses 4-9.**

It appears from Num. xx. 18-20 that the Edomites were prepared to resist Israel's passage through their land. But the country was not invaded, and the Edomites did not attack nor hinder them in their journey. The Israelites are forbidden to meddle with these nations, for their lands were given them; to remember their blood relationship, and to deal kindly and justly with them. From this charge learn—

**I.** Natural advantage is no ground for strife. The Israelites were now strong in number and wealth. God was with them, and terror fell upon their enemies. "They shall be afraid of you." But they were not to take advantage of prevalent fear and weak opponents. The strong must help and not oppress the weak. Right and not might must rule. We are not to despise others because we are stronger than they in body and mind. Great nations should not invade and destroy small ones. Aggressive war may defeat its end, and ruin those who engage in it. "Scatter thou the people that delight in war."

**II.** Natural brotherhood is a ground for social intercourse. Israel, Edom, and Moab, were kinspeople. "Our brethren the children of Esau." All nations are made of one blood, bound by natural affinity, and mutually dependent. Trade, commerce, and international treaties, promote the good feeling and develop the resources of nations. Israel must not war, but trade. Their social intercourse must be straight-forward and honourable—not in jealousy, but in love—not as strangers, but as brethren. "Honour all men, love the brotherhood."

**III.** God's gifts to others are no reason for dissatisfaction with our own. "I will not give thee of their land," ver. 8, "because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession," ver. 4. God has apportioned to men and nations their position. They are to be grateful and content, and not to touch possessions which do not belong to them. Covet no man's houses or land, envy no person's influence and position. Be content with your own lot—it might have been worse—improve your own gifts. The desire of something unpossessed is a greater source of misery than positive pain or actual destitution. Solon asked by Croesus, "Who was the happiest man?" referred to a poor cottager of Greece, who never desired greater wealth or a better condition than he possessed.

**IV.** God's goodness in the past is an encouragement for future blessings. "The Lord thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing." God had blessed Israel with abundance and they had no need to beg nor steal. His continued presence should prevent us from resorting to fraud or violence to supply our wants. We have God's all sufficient providence to depend upon, and should therefore live by faith and constant obedience. Our wants are known and our supplies are promised (*cf.* Deut. viii. 2, 3, 15, 16). Carking anxiety preys upon temper, spirits, and health; leads to envy, selfishness, and unbelief; and acts like the vulture feeding upon the vitals of Prometheus while chained to the rock. "Take no thought for the morrow."

GOD'S CARE FOR HUMAN LIFE.—*Verse 7.*

*He knoweth* thy walking. God is omniscient and knows all things. But this knowledge is not mere notice, but intimate acquaintance with every step and circumstance of life; a fatherly care and regard for men. We learn therefore from this verse—

**I. Human life is under divine control.** This knowing comprehends purpose, presence, and providential guidance. 1. *In preventing wrong.* Israel were prevented from entering Canaan when determined to go in defiance of God's command. A rebellious self-will leads men to misery and destruction, but a merciful providence checks their folly. 2. *In disposing to right.* Israel's proud will was conquered, and they were led back into the wilderness. They were humbled and taught to obey and depend upon God. We are prevented from sin "and made willing" to serve in "the day of God's power."

**II. Human life is measured by Divine purpose.** The journey in the desert is a type of our life in the world. God fixed the time—"these forty years." So human life is measured in its length. It is not a matter of chance or inflexible law, but an object of Divine purpose. So many days, months, years, and no more. "The measure of my days." "Man's life," says Mt. Henry, "is no more governed by the stoic's blind fate, than by the Epicuræan's blind fortune." "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee."

**III. Human life is an object of Divine care.** Whatever God makes He sustains. Human life, Christian life, is especially dear to Him. 1. *In our journeys.* "Thy walking." Temporally and spiritually the steps of a good man are ordered (formed, prepared) by the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 23). God keeps an exact account, and notes every incident of our life. "Thou tellest (takest note of) my wanderings" (Ps. lvi. 8). 2. *In our works.* "In all the works of thy hand." Flocks and herds had increased (Num. xxxii. 1). Israel had gained wealth in trafficking with the tribes, and in cultivating the soil of the desert. There can be no prosperity or increase in labour without God's blessing. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich." 3. *In our wants.* "Thou hast lacked nothing." God had been their leader and protector, chosen places of rest and supplied their varied wants. Their clothes decayed not, and their shoes wore not away (Deut. xxix. 5). He knows our wants and wishes, temporal and spiritual, and can sustain us through life. "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing." If God knows, measures and controls our pilgrimage on earth. 1. Learn dependence on Him. 2. Submit to Him. 3. Seek His guidance and presence.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1-4. God the Leader of His people. Resting where they encamp, going with them in their journey, commanding and directing in their march and social intercourse.

Ver. 4. *Take ye good heed to yourselves.* Self-control needed. 1. *In prosperity.* Israel wonderfully blessed in strength and numbers, but must not become selfish and tyrannical. 2. *In*

*the presence of those who fear us.* When men are an easy prey to us we are ready to take advantage. But we must be cautious, and keep strict control over our spirit and actions.

Ver. 7. *God's continued mercies to us.* That we may see that God's care was not exclusively confined to Israel, we will show—I. What mercies have been vouchsafed to us during the

whole period of our sojourning in this wilderness. In relation to—1. Temporal concerns: the necessities and luxuries of life; 2. The concerns of the soul. II. Under what circumstances they have been continued to

us. If we look at Israel they will serve to show us. 1. How great our provocations towards God have been. 2. How entirely we have been under the influence of unbelief.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

### THE VICISSITUDES OF NATIONS.—*Verses 10-12; 20-23.*

The mention of the Moabites gives occasion for the interpolation of remarks concerns the earliest inhabitants of these countries. From what we read of these nations in this and other places, we trace the providence and purpose of God in history.

I. God has made Nations to differ in their character and habits of life. The names of these people are instructive. *The Enims* were considered by the Moabites to be terrible; men of gigantic stature and fierce manners. *The Horim* appear to be dwellers in caves, which abound in the Edomite range. Their origin is not known (*cf.* Gen. xiv. 6; xxxvi. 20). *The Zamzummims*, verse 20, a bullying presumptuous band of Rephaim; Gen. xiv. 5, were another giant tribe. *The Avim* dwelt in villages (farms) south-west of Canaan, and were a pastoral people. *The Captorims* sprang from *Capthor* (Gen. x. 14), and were immigrants, like the Israelites. Thus some nations are physically strong and numerous, and others few and weak; some blessed with natural and others with spiritual advantages. The climate and products, the language and diversities of nations display the wisdom and goodness of God.

II. God displaces some nations to fix others. God permitted the children of Esau to drive out the Horims; Moab to subdue the Enims; and the Capthorims to dislodge the Avims. Wars of conquests, changes of dynasties, and revolutions of history are under Divine control, and work out Divine purposes. The same law appears in the formation and government of the earth, and in the progress of Christianity. "This is so often repeated, to possess the minds of the Israelites with a sense of God's providence, which rules everywhere; displacing one people and settling another in their stead, and fixing their bounds also, which they shall not pass without leave" (*Patrick*). "He putteth down one, and setteth up another."

III. God in the history of nations teaches many lessons. If the providence of God is seen in the settlement of nations, it is not by chance or accident that they are what and where they are. Learn—1. *That all our possessions are the gifts of God.* Whatever be the skill and valour by which they were gained, in some mysterious manner they come from Him. The lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are said to be given by God. Canaan was not acquired by the valour of Israel, but by the will of God. 2. *That all our possessions are uncertain in their tenure.* If nations can be deprived of their territories, kings of their thrones, and families of their inheritance: What hold have we of earthly fortunes? Why may we not be deprived of our place and power? Let us take heed lest we forfeit our blessings, lest God "take us away and pluck us out of our dwelling place."

"What exhibitions various hath the world  
Witness'd of mutability in all  
That we account most durable below!  
Change is the diet on which all subsist;  
Created changeable, and change at last  
Destroys them."—*Cowper*.



MEN OF WAR CONSUMED.—*Verses 14, 15.*

The outbreak at Kadesh at the false report of the spies was only the filling up of the measure of Israel's iniquity. That generation was not wholly given up to idolatry, but they had displayed a fearful amount of rebellion in the desert, only hinted at in this history, but truly described in other places. (Ezek. 20, 25, 26 ; Amos v. 25, 27 ; Acts vii. 42.) For this great wickedness "the men of war," those able to war, the responsible transgressors were doomed to perish in the desert by special judgments of God.

I. The cause of this consumption. By their long and open revolt, Israel had provoked the wrath of God. In his displeasure they were punished and buried in the wilderness. Wickedness of any kind is most unprofitable, often brings down the judgments of God and shortens human life. "With whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?"

II. The method of this consumption. Their unbelief made this "a day of provocation in the wilderness" and their punishment was most exemplary. 1. It was a *terrible* consumption. "I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them." 2. It was a *complete* destruction. With two exceptions the whole generation were blotted out of existence. 3. This was *designedly* carried out. "When all the men of war were consumed and dead," then and not before were they permitted to invade the land and conquer its inhabitants. God can do without the greatest warriors. In his cause faith is more needful than numbers. This gives courage and make children heroes. God designs to give success, by removing the wise and the mighty and causing us to look to Him alone. "To whom sware he that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not."

ISRAEL'S CHARGE CONCERNING THE AMMONITES.—*Verses 16-19.*

After the death of the generation that had sinned the people were to cross the border of Moab and advance into Canaan. To the east of Moab was the country of the Ammonites, but Israel was not to touch them, for God had bestowed upon them possessions which must be held sacred. From this charge we learn—

I. The honour God puts upon His word. "I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession." God never breaks His word, nor changes His purpose. Ammon did not belong to the chosen people, but God guaranteed them certain temporal advantages. He is faithful in His dealings with them, and others must be taught to recognise this faithfulness. "I am the Lord ; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass."

II. The sacredness of human rights. "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance," and what is assigned to them by right belongs to them. It is our duty to respect national rights and national territories, and never wrong men by force or fraud. They may insult and seek to do us mischief, as Moab sought to ruin Israel (Num. xxii. 6), but we are not to retaliate, nor meddle with their possessions. "He that studieth revenge keepeth his wounds open."—*Bacon*.

III. The blessings derived by children from their ancestors. The Ammonites are called "the children of Lot," a righteous ancestor. We have power to be of service to our offspring, and put succeeding generations under obligation. "Children often fare the better in this world for the piety of their ancestors," says *Math. Henry*, "The seed of the upright, though they degenerate, yet are blessed with temporal good things."

THE FIRST WAR.—*Verses 24, 25.*

Israel ceased to meddle with some nations and thus practised self-denial and obedience. Now God gives them commission to begin the war, and promises them success over Sihon, king of Heshbon. If we wrong not others, God will ever right us.

**I. Israel must co-operate with God to attain the victory.** God purposed to give Sihon into their hands, but they must "contend with him in battle." God's promise does not exclude human effort. It should stimulate and encourage it. To secure the fulfilment of the pledge, we must "rise up" from idleness and doubt. God has promised to give us daily bread, a regular harvest, and spiritual conquest in His service; but we have to pray and fight.

**II. God will help and encourage Israel when they begin the contest.** No longer must they wait or hesitate. They must take the journey, pass over the river, begin the war. 1. *The enemy is dispirited.* They trembled in fear, were bereft of strength, and were ready to melt away before the victorious nation. "Their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" Jos. v. 1. 2. *God begins the work, and they have only to carry it on.* "Begin to possess it," for "this day will I begin." God's people must follow their Commander in courage and confidence. Fear, inactivity, and cowardliness may lose the day. Success often depends upon the vigour of the onset. "The first stroke is half the battle." This was seen at the battle of Cressy, in King Alfred's attack upon the Danes, and in Israel's conflict with Sihon. "Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles."

THE DESTRUCTION OF SIHON.—*Verses 26-37.*

The kingdom of Sihon formed no part of the land promised to the seed of Abraham. Moses desired to pass through peaceably, and sent messengers to request this, but the king rejected the proposal, met Israel with hostility, and brought ruin upon his people and country.

**I. An example of human folly.** A respectful and pacific message was rejected (*cf.* Num. xxi. 21, 22). Israel was not permitted to pass through the "high way" quietly, and pay for what provisions they wanted, but Sihon made a bold and unprovoked attack, and was utterly defeated. What folly to be obstinate in wrong doing, to oppose might against right, and bring on self-destruction! How often are men found self-willed, casting off all restraint, forgetting their opportunities, and ripening themselves for judgment by abusing their mercies!

**II. An illustration of spiritual law.** "God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate." Not by evil influence, but by permitting him to carry out his own will, and to remain in circumstances fitted to soften rather than to harden. This effect results from a law which we see in operation every day in our moral nature. Sin blinds the mind, and alienates the affections. Indulgence in self-will corrupts and hardens the heart. When men resist the truth, and ward off appeals of conscience—when they are obstinate and invincible in sin—then a process of hardening goes on. They have less struggle, less compunction, and less feeling. And as the same sun melts one substance and hardens another, so the gospel subdues one heart and indirectly hardens another—becomes the savour of life to one and the savour of death to another. Pharaoh grew more stubborn, and rushed madly to his ruin. Ahab despised reproof until "the bow" received its commission. "He that being often

reproved (a man of reproof, *marg.*) hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

**III. An evidence of a retributive Providence.** This law is a mysterious operation of God in the moral government of the world. God hardened Sihon "that He might deliver him" up. The guilt of the Amorites was great, ready for judicial punishment. If they gained their territory by violence and bloodshed—if they forced their way into Gilead and Bashan, then they were repaid; for as they measured to others it was measured to them. But a natural course of sin against spiritual laws and unseen forces will bring retributive justice. In this world we have awful examples, predictions, and precursors of the judgment to come.

"Oh! blind to truth and God's whole scheme below,  
Who fancy bliss to vice, to virtue woe."—*Pope.*

### THE VICTORY OF JAHAZ.—*Verses 32-35.*

Jahaz was a memorable place—a city of Moab, afterwards assigned to the tribe of Reuben and given to the priests (Jos. xiii. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 33; Is. xv. 4). Here Israel fought a battle and gained the victory.

**I. The victory was gained in self-defence.** Israel could only reach Canaan through the lands of Sihon. All reasonable demands had been rejected. They were hindered in seeking their natural rights, and provoked to war by a needless attack. A righteous cause gives courage, and inspires hope of victory in the conflict.

**II. The victory was secured by Divine help.** "The Lord our God delivered him before us." With God with us we shall always win, but without Him numbers and skill will not avail. In all spiritual conflicts victory belongs to Him, "for the battle is not your's, but God's."

**III. The victory was decisive in its results.** The battle had not to be fought again. Its advantages were not worthless. It was complete and overwhelming. The people were exterminated; "We smote him, and his sons, and all his people"—a warning to all who fight against God. The cities were "utterly destroyed" and the land desolated.

**IV. The victory was limited in its operations.** Only cattle and material goods were booty for the conquerors. The lands of the Ammonites were not touched. They left undone "whatsoever the Lord our God forbad us" to do. Ambition must be checked, and victors must learn self-control and dependence upon the Divine will. "Next to gaining a great victory is knowing how to use it," said Wellington.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 24. Rise up.** Activity, diligence, progress and Divine direction in Christian pilgrimage. Neither be idle, nor remain stationary.

**Vers. 24, 25. I have given, rise up.** Attainment of Divine gifts. 1. They are ready to be given. 2. God will help us to get them. (a) By giving strength. "Contend with Him." (b) By disposing us to follow Him. "I begin"—"You begin."

**Vers. 24, 25. The fame of Israel as a conquering people.** I. How, at this time, that fame was increased, viz., by the conquest of the mightiest nations east of Jordan. II. The moral effects of this conquest. 1. Israel prepared for future conquest. 2. Canaan awed before she had received a blow.—*Biblical Museum.*

**Ver. 30. Made his heart obstinate.** Learn—1. God's power over men.



2. God's method of dealing with men as *moral governor and judge*. He suffers them to be hardened in consequence of obstinate wickedness, yet not as an arbitrary, capricious, or tyrannical being. He wills nothing but good, and therefore His will is the proper rule of judgment. But men obstinately pervert and resist His will. Hence learn—3. Man's fearful power in opposing God and destroying himself. "Who hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered?"

Ver. 31. *Israel victorious*. We may apply thus to the spiritual Israel, the Christian Church. 1. We have a warfare. Contest with ignorance and sin, Satan and the world. 2. In this warfare God prepares the world for the conquests of the Church. By toning society, removing difficulties, and striking terror into the enemies. The world was never riper than at present for courageous, determined effort. "Great fear came on all them that heard those things." 3. In this warfare the Church can only conquer by God's presence. "Providence is with the strongest battalions," said Napoleon. But in this war neither might nor numbers will avail. "Not by might, nor by power." 4. The more victorious is

the Church the stronger is she for warfare. Victory gives experience, courage, and confidence in the commander. One success may be the forerunner of many. Israel's prowess flew on the winds, and widespread fear made further achievements easy. Good deeds reproduce themselves. The conquests of grace in the heart, and of the gospel in the world, inspire the Church with hope and enthusiasm. She becomes stronger, more ready to obey and fight, and appears "terrible as an army with banners."

Vers. 31–33. *Sihon's defeat*. 1. Self-inflicted. "He came out." 2. Unexpected. Just the reverse of anticipation. "I have them," cried Napoleon, concerning the English at Waterloo. What disappointment! 3. Very sudden. Only one pitched battle. 4. Divinely accomplished. "And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them."

Vers. 33 and 37. *The secret of successful undertaking*. 1. When directed by God. 2. When accompanied by God's help. 3. When made subservient to God's will.

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. *Turned*. Thus God orders our will without infringing our liberty. We observe this supremacy, in *directing* not only an important end, but every step towards it. Often has the way of our own devising been blocked up and an opposite way marked out, with the ultimate acknowledgement.—"He led me forth in the right way.—*Bridge*."

Ver. 3. *Long enough*. Delays, whether in the business of God or our own, are hateful and prejudicial; many lose the land of promise by lingering.—*Nicholls*.

Ver. 4, 5. *Meddle not*. How many

unholy hearts would be restrained by the practice of these rules of wisdom and love! A generous self-forgetting warmth of kindness puts down the first evil; denying ourselves the pleasure of justifying our cause, or triumphing over our opponent; instead of standing upon punctilious reforms, or waiting for an acknowledgement from the offender.—*Bridge*.

Ver. 6. *Water*. The value attached to water in the East is here brought strikingly before us; also the justice which characterised the policy of the Jewish law giver. The Edomites were in possession of the wells, and the fluid

of life must be paid for, if money would be accepted.—*Temperance Commentary.*

Ver. 7. *Knoweth.* Have you not much reason for thankfulness in your retrospect? And when things you undertook have not prospered in your sense of prosperity, have you not found that in some way you never expected they did you good? Have you not often been thankful that you did not succeed where your heart was calculating on unbounded success? Where your work has not enriched you, has it not often humbled you? and are you not constrained to say now, after an impartial retrospect of thirty, forty or sixty years, that "the Lord hath blessed me in all the works of my hands."—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 10-12; 20-23. *National changes.* The succession of tribes or nations indicated in the chapter is a very remarkable feature; showing that not only individuals pass away like a shadow, but nations also. There is not a nation at this moment inhabited by the people that dwelt in it fifteen, or sixteen hundred years ago. The people in Rome are less like the ancient Romans than we are; the inhabitants of Athens are not the lineal descendants of the ancient Greeks. And who knows not that our own country has successively been invaded by Saxon, Norman, and Dane; and that Britain which we look upon as our home has been successively peopled by different

nations. As if God would teach the nations of the earth, as well as the units that compose them, that here we have no continuing city, no fixed place of abode; that we are nationally and individually pilgrims and strangers and should be looking for a better country.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 14. 16. *Wasted.*

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,  
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground:

Another race the following spring supplies;  
They fall successive, and successive rise.

—*Pope's Homer.*

Ver. 24, 25. *Fear of thee.* As in the natural world in times of ripeness there is change in the appearance of things; so there are evident signs of ripeness in the spiritual world. There is a preparedness with individuals, neighbourhoods, and nations. Let the Church awake and work, and her victories will be large and immediate.

Ver. 33-37. *God delivered.* The person who has a firm trust in the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every Divine attribute, and loses his own insufficiency in the fulness of Infinite Perfection.—*Addison.*

Give me the eye which can see God in all, and the hand which can serve Him with all, and the heart which can bless him for all.—*Abp. Secker.*

## CHAPTER III.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—*Conquest of Og.* Israel were able to advance to the Jordan after the defeat of Sihon and the conquest of his land. But Og, the Amonitish King, still kept the northern half of Gilead and all Bashan, a rugged mountainous country, valuable for rich and luxuriant pastures.

1. Came out. Without provocation, disliking the presence of the Israelites, or seeking to revenge the overthrow of his friends and allies, Og rushed to attack.

2. *Cf. Num. xxi. 31, etc.*

4. *Argob (stony).* A region including the sixty towns which formed the kingdom of Og in Bashan, *i.e.*, all the towns of the land of Bashan, *viz.* (according to ver. 5) all the fortified towns

besides the unfortified and open country towns of Bashan. (*cf. Porter's "Giant Cities of Bashan," and "Historico-Geographical sketch of Bashan ;" Camb. Essays, Art, "Ancient Bashan and the Cities of Og," by Cyril Graham and Speak. Com. in loco.*)

8-11. Moses takes a retrospective view of the whole of the land taken on the other side of the Jordan ; first of all (ver. 9) in its whole extent from the Arnon to Hermon, then (ver. 10) in its separate parts, to bring out in all its grandeur what the Lord had done for Israel. The notices of the different names of Hermon (ver. 9), and of the bed of king Og (ver. 11), are also subversive to this end.—*Keil.*

11. Giant's Rephaim (Gen. xiv. 5 ; xv. 20) bedstead of iron for strength, durability, and a prevention against insects which infest wood in warm climates. The ordinary cubit was eighteen inches. Now a bed is always larger than the man who sleeps in it. Probably Og had his bed made so large, partly for ostentation, partly "as a memorial of his superhuman greatness, on the occasion of some expedition of his against the Ammonites ; and this bed may have been preserved in their capital as a proof of the greatness of their foe."—*Keil.*

Vers. 12-20. A review of the conquered land. "The land taken from the two kings was given by Moses to the two tribes and a half for a possession. The southern portion from Aroer in the Arnon valley (*cf. Num. xxxii. 34*), and half Gilead (as far as the Jablak, ver. 10) with its towns (which are enumerated, Josh. xiii. 15-20 and 24-28) to the Reubenites and Gadites ; and the northern half of Gilead, with the whole of Bashan (*i.e.* all the region of Argob, ver. 4, and Num. xxxii. 33.) to the half tribe of Manasseh."—*Keil.*

15. *Cf. Num. xxxii., xxxix., xl. ; 1 Chron. ii. 22.*

16-17. The possession of Reuben and Gad is more exactly described according to its boundaries.

18-20. The two tribes and a half are reminded of the condition on which their possessions were given to them (*cf. Num. xxxii. 20-32*). Meet for war, *lit.*, sons of power or might ; not all men of war, or of age to war ; but man specially powerful and fit for the enterprise.

22. He emphatic, if God Himself would fight, no need for fear.

25. Goodly mountain, the whole range of the mountains of Canaan, culminating in distant Lebanon—goodly, when contrasted with the arid desert. Moses longed to enter the land ; naturally thought the Divine threatening was conditional and reversible, but his request not granted.

26. Wroth. Addressing the people, Moses mentions the punishment of their leaders as a most impressive warning to them (*Speak. Com.*). Their conduct was the occasion of his sin. Suffice, *lit.*, enough for thee, be satisfied with what I have given and done for thee.

27. Pisgah, the northern portion of the mountains of Abarim. Top of Pisgah, *i.e.*, Mount Nebo (chap. xxiv. 1).

28. *Cf. chap. i. 38 ; iii. 21 ; xxxi. 7 ; Num. xxvii. 23.* A precise indication of the locality in which the address was given to Israel.

### DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT.—Verses 1, 2.

Before crossing Jordan, Israel turned and went northwards, "up the way to Bashan." Og, a mighty king, ruled in that country. God purposed to give the Israelites all his lands, but they, perhaps, hesitated, or were afraid ; hence the injunction, "Fear him not."

I. The need of encouragement. In ordinary conflicts we have need of heart and courage. But special circumstances demand special help. 1. *They were surrounded with dangers.* In a rocky country (Argob), well suited to harass and entangle the invaders. With a powerful and warlike foe in front, well posted and defended in impregnable fortresses, they might well fear. Man, sinful man, is timid in spiritual conflict, and fear often leads to flight. 2. *They were about to engage with a giant race.* Og, the redoubtable leader, was the remnant of the *Rephaim* (Gen. xiv. 5, xv. 20). The people were numerous and courageous. They "came out against us." But giants are only pigmies before God.

II. The ground of encouragement. There is always reason for doing what God commands. 1. *The Promise of God.* "I will deliver him." God's promise is connected with His purpose, and what He has purposed He will do for us. Hence



fear not, trust and obey. 2. *Their own past experience.* "Thou shalt do unto him as thou did'st unto Sihon." One conquest gives joy and help for another. Every evil course forsaken, and every sinful habit subdued by God's grace, give consciousness of God's presence and qualify us for other contests. In our moral warfare let us have courage to do right, to resist temptation, and to serve God. To be undetermined when the work is so urgent, and the command to do it so authoritative, is disobedience and death.

### THE CONQUEST OF OG.—Verses 1-7.

"The last of his race in this region, he was still the ruler of his country; and the whole Amorite inhabitants from Hermon to the Jabbok, and from the Jordan to the desert, acknowledged the supremacy of this giant warrior. Og resolved to defend his country. It was a splendid inheritance, and he would not resign it without a struggle. Collecting his forces he marshalled them on the broad plain before Edrei. We have no details of the battle; but doubtless the Amorites and their leader fought bravely for country and for life. It was in vain; a stronger than human arm warred for Israel. Og's army was defeated, and he himself was slain."—Porter. Learn—

**I. The power of right over might.** God had given the land to Israel, and they were fighting for their possessions. Og was a mighty king. His people confided in his strength and their own prowess. They believed in worldly power, in physical force. In modern as well as in rude ages might is exalted and trusted. But "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." "The fortunes of war" change, and one incautious step may end in ruin. Truth and right, God and His cause are mightiest and will prevail.

**II. The impotence of hostile preparations against God.** Og was confident in his attack. His cities were impregnable, and it was impossible for Israel to overcome them or escape. But how impotent to defend themselves. The sixty cities, walled to heaven and stoutly defended, were levelled to the dust. The rout was most wonderful and complete. So will it be with all power and hostility against the cause of God. "Voltaire boasted that it took twelve men to set up Christianity, but he would show that one man was sufficient to overthrow it," says a writer. The giant power of this world may assault. Paganism, infidelity, and modern science may oppose, but God will defend His people and advance His kingdom.

**III. The mysterious providence of God on behalf of His people.** "Humanly speaking, Israel could never have conquered Og had he remained in the cities. They could not have invested the country, or endured long sieges. It would require no small amount of skill to entice these people from behind walls; and it is more improbable that such a people should, of their own free will, risk a battle in the open plain. There must have been some almost miraculous interference in favour of the Israelites. And from a casual notice in another place (Josh. xxiv. 12), we find that God sent a special scourge among these Rephaim in the shape of swarms of hornets, which we may suppose harassed them so much in their stone houses that they were driven out of their towns, and preferred the alternative of meeting the Israelites to perishing from the stings of these creatures."—(Cyril Graham.) Thus by strange providences God helps His people.

THE CONQUEST OF TWO KINGS.—*Verses 8-12.*

Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, were two famous kings; conspicuous for bravery, high, and distinguished from all others, such was the dread they inspired that God gave Israel special encouragement in attacking them. These giants were conquered. "We utterly destroyed them."

**I. Conquest of enemies strong and numerous.** These giants were strong in themselves, and in their cities and armies. They were strong in their feeling of security, and in their hope of victory. God never destroys His enemies in their weakness, but in their might, that the glory may be to His name. "I will break the chief (choice or highest) of their strength." (Jer. xlix. 35.)

**II. Conquest to give place to others.** Nations have their time, pass away, and give way to others. They are great one day and conquered the next. Their glory departs, and their inheritance is bestowed upon successors. Power, fame, and wealth are transferred from one to another; populations are destroyed and lands possessed to fulfil the purpose of God. Spiritually giant evils are overcome, and "rulers of the darkness of this world" are dislodged to secure and advance the interests of His people. In this we may learn—1. *God's hatred to sin.* 2. *God's severity against evil doers.* 3. *God's kindness to His people.*

**III. Conquest most memorable.** "This signal victory and its circumstances evidently impressed the people deeply at this time, and its memory, as the Psalms attest, lingered for ages after in the national mind." (*Speak Com.*) Proverbs and inspired songs (*cf.* Num. xxi. 27-30; Ps. cxxxv. 11, 12, cxxxvi. 19-21) commemorated the triumphs of Israel.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1, 2. Came out.** 1. *The boldness and self-confidence of the enemy.* Men often infatuated by those very measures which they think are most wisely adopted. 2. *The readiness of God to help.* (a) In timidity. "Fear not." (b) In danger. "I will deliver." (c) In contest. "Thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon."

**Vers. 1-7. A famous victory.** I. *Victory promised before the battle.* An evidence of God's condescension and an encouragement to Israel. II. *Victory gained by the strength of past experience.* The conquest of Sihon

prepared for the conquest of Og. The joy of victory spurs to further contest, and begets courageous faith. III. *Victory most complete.* 1. The cities destroyed. 2. The people exterminated. 3. The cattle taken; and 4. The land possessed and parcelled out to others.

**Ver. 11. King Og's bedstead.** 1. *A monument of human folly.* Trying to frighten by size. 2. *A trophy of conquest.* It might be seized as a prize, purchased from Israelites as a curiosity, or Og, being wounded, might have fled to Rabbath, and died on his own bedstead.

REVIEW OF CONQUERED TERRITORIES.—*Verses 12-21.*

After the conquest of Sihon and Og, the remaining countries on the east side of Jordan were brought into subjection by the energy of Jair. This chief, according to the pastoral habits of his people, called the "Bashan villages"

(Num. xxxii. 41) by a name after his own, Bashan-havoth-jair. These conquered territories are reviewed in their extent and in their separate parts.

**I. The method in which they were conquered.** Whatever reason led the Israelites northwards, it was a matter of necessity as well as policy to secure a base of operations. 1. *The lands were given by God, but acquired by human effort.* God promised the land, but they had to fight and possess it. God's purposes never interfere with our use of means, and the only way to secure possessions is to co-operate with Him. 2. *The lands were finally subdued by chosen men.* Jair occupied the pastoral parts, and Nobah (*cf.* Num. xxxii. 42), of the family of Machir, took Kenath, the capital, and gave his name to it. Pioneers have been found in all departments. In all warfare and enterprise a few heroic men have set examples, and stimulated others to follow them. They live among us in the records of history, and in the deeds of their lives. They bequeath to posterity a name to study, admire, and imitate.

**II. The reasons for which they were held.** Each tribe had its own conquests secured to them, and the boundaries so arranged as to prevent dispute. But wives and little ones were to be left in captured cities. Men of war were to go forward and drive out all the enemies before them, and then "return and be guiltless before the Lord" (*cf.* Num. xxxii, 20-23. The land was held on condition that they helped others. They fought for homes and inheritance for their brethren. Our wealth, position, and influence, are not given for selfish purposes, but to interest and help our fellow-men. We should be disinterested, for we can never be exempted in any service. This is the secret of personal enjoyment and successful work for Christ. "Then ye shall return unto the land of your possession and enjoy it." Josh. i. 13-15.

#### JOSHUA NOMINATED.—Verses 21, 22.

This reminiscence recalls God's goodness in the appointment of Joshua (Num. xxvii. 12) which took place "*at that time*," that is, after the conquest of the land on the east of Jordan. Joshua was honoured and qualified to succeed Moses, in an eminent degree, through the special service of the high priest, and the endowments of the Spirit of God. Yet the people needed encouragement in such a leader as Joshua, "Fear not," etc. In these words, notice—

**I. Past experience reminds of God's goodness.** "Thine eyes have seen," etc. The testimony of sense and experience should be convincing enough. God's goodness is not a mere declaration or display, but a matter of feeling and enjoyment. "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good."

**II. Past success a pledge of future help.** "So shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest." What God had done to Sihon and Og, He could do unto all mighty men. His hand is never tired, never shortened, that it cannot save. What He begins for His people He will finish, and the victories of the past typify the future conquests of the gospel.

**III. Present help should prompt to future courage.** "The Lord your God shall fight for you," therefore "fear not them." When God is with us, our cause must be victorious. We reproach our leader, dishearten our comrades, and weaken ourselves, when we follow in fear and trembling. "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men," that ye be not servants unto (your enemies). (1 Sam. iv. 9.)

"Our doubts are traitors ;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it."—Shakespeare.



THE PRAYER OF MOSES.—*Verses 23-28.*

Moses knew that he would not be permitted to enter Canaan, yet he desired to cross the Jordan and see the land. His request was not granted. In the answer we “behold the goodness and severity of God”—severity in the punishment of his sin and goodness in its mitigation.

I. The request of Moses. The entreaty is most fervent and affecting, containing an appeal to God’s greatness and power by which he was distinguished from heathen deities and known to his people. 1. *To enjoy further manifestations of Divine goodness.* “Thou hast begun to show.” The past was only a beginning, a foretaste. The more we see of Divine power and taste of Divine love, the more we desire to see. 2. *To enter the land.* “Let me go over and see the good land.” For this object had he lived, and when about to be realised he was disappointed. How often do we come near to success and never gain it! The hopes of a lifetime may be frustrated when apparently about to be realised. 3. *To finish his work.* It was natural for Moses to wish to retain the leadership to the end instead of resigning it into other hands. He had brought the people out of Egypt, why not lead them into Canaan and settle them in it? It is possible through sin to leave our work undone, or be made to resign it to others. But we must seek the honour of God, not our own, and be ready to encourage others whom God puts in our place.

II. The answer of God to this request. The prayer of Moses was not answered. God, in His infinite wisdom, refused, and besought him to urge the request no further. It was good for Israel, and good for Moses himself to be denied. “God,” says Cecil, “denies a Christian nothing, but with a design to give him something better.” 1. *God demands submission to His will.* “Let it suffice thee.” Be satisfied with past favours and present arrangements, and submit. Grace given, will be grace all sufficient. When we know God’s will, we must acquiesce at once without murmuring and disputing. “I besought the Lord thrice; and He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee.” 2. *God refused entrance, but permits him to see the land.* “Lift up thine eyes.” This view has been memorable in history, impressed our theology, and become a proverb in Christian life. Perhaps Moses was specially prepared for this vision, for “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” Prayer is not always unsuccessful. God may refuse one thing and bestow another. 3. *God assures him that his work shall be finished by the appointment of a successor.* “Charge Joshua, for he shall go over before this people.” Workmen may be taken away, but the work shall go on. Moses may bring out of Egypt—Joshua must lead into Canaan. God finds the men; we are to train and charge them, to finish what we begin. Earnest workers, youthful vigour, shall never be wanting in the Christian Church. Hence, let us take encouragement, and fear to sin, lest we die before our special work is done. If Moses was excluded from Canaan, how can the sinner enter heaven? “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.”

WISHING TO GO OVER JORDAN.—*Verse 25.*

This desire seemed *improper*. For God had expressly said unto Moses and Aaron, “Ye shall not bring this congregation into the land.” Did Moses, then, through infirmity, think that God was changeable? No, but he thought whether the threatening was absolute, especially as it was not ratified by oath,

as the exclusion of the people was. For many of God's denunciations, in the sentence against Nineveh, for instance, have a condition implied, though not expressed, *i.e.*, they will be executed *unless* repentance intervene; upon this principle it was possible for Moses to hope for retraction of the interdict. But the desire was *a natural one*. Natural to wish to enter Canaan as an object of curiosity, of which he had heard so much; still more as an object of hope, which had been promised so long with every enhancement. This animated the people to leave Egypt, and encouraged them in the desert. This was the end, the recompense of their toils for forty years, and now they had nearly reached it. How painful to miss the prize when the hand was seizing it—to have the cup dashed even from the lip! Yet the desire was *refused*. God sometimes refuses the desires of His servants, even the most eminent. He does this in two ways. Sometimes He does it in *love*. What is desired might prove dangerous and injurious. We should think badly of a father who gave a stone for bread, or a scorpion for a fish. But if the son were to ask for a scorpion instead of a fish, or cry for a sharp instrument, *then* would he not hate his child unless he rejected his wish? In many cases must a wise and good parent distinguish between wishes and wants! A child may wish for liberty, and want restraint; for a holiday, and want schooling; for dainties, and want medicine. Here the parent must act, not according to the wish, but the welfare of the child. How much better for the Jews had God turned a deaf ear to their importunity? Who knows what is good for a man in this life? No one but God—the *good* God. He sometimes refuses in *anger*. Wrath is incompatible with love; but anger is not: anger may even flow from it. Though Christians cannot be condemned, they may be chastened: and the law of the house is, that if the children obey not, He will visit with the rod. Hence those saved eternally may fall under present rebuke, and be refused many things on which they set their heart. By such conduct Providence teaches submission to His people, and the evil of sin to others. Yet His desire was *partially indulged*. The command to get on the top of Pisgah was not to tantalize him, but to be a *mitigation* of the severe sentence. The preservation of his sight fitted him for the gaze—the prospect showed him how worthy the country was of all that had been said about it; and would give him high views of the truth and goodness of God in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With this also was the influence of Divine grace which satisfied him and made him content with his condition. While his mind also raised to things above, in type and emblem, to a better country, into which he was immediately to enter—and there would be no want of Canaan. Thus in judgment God remembers mercy, and though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion. “Like as a father pitieth his children,” etc. (Condensed from *Jay*.)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 18–20. *Your brethren*. Armed before them to help them in warfare. 1. One party should not retire from active service or conflict until the rights of others are gained. 2. The welfare of one part of the community should be the concern of all. 3. There should be no schism nor separation in the body. This might easily have taken place with a geographical division so complete.

Vers. 21 and 28. *Appointment of Joshua*. 1. God's care for His people. 2. God's provision made for them—*(a)* In selecting suitable persons. *(b)* Securing them sympathy and co-operation. *(c)* In promising all needed help.

Ver. 28. 1. The duties of Joshua *(a)* to lead into Canaan, “go over,” etc.; *(b)* divide the land and settle

the tribes. "He shall cause them to inherit the land." 2. The requirements of Joshua—(a) charge, (b) encourage, and (c) strengthen him.

Ver. 25. *Good land.* Canaan pro-

mised—fruitful—the chosen home of God's people and a type of heaven.

"All o'er those wide extended plains  
Shines one eternal day;  
There God, the Sun, for ever reigns,  
And scatters night away."—*Stennett.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-3. *Og came out.* Man proposes but God disposes. How many plans are rendered abortive by death. On the tomb of Mohammed II is the inscription, "I proposed to myself the conquest of Rhodes and proud Italy." Og thought to destroy Israel. How different the result!

having invaded the country, and this omission, combined with the mention of his gigantic stature, warrants the conjecture that he was one of the leaders of the aboriginal race, for which Bashan had always been renowned.—*Stanley.*

Ver. 4-10. *These cities.* The conquest of Bashan, began under the leadership of Moses in person, was completed by Jair, one of the most distinguished chiefs of the tribe of Manasseh. In narrating his achievements, the sacred historian brings out another remarkable fact connected with this kingdom of Bashan. In Argob, one of its little provinces, Jair took no less than *sixty great cities*, "fenced with high walls, gates and bars; besides unwallied towns a great many." Such a statement seems all but incredible. It would not stand the arithmetic of Bishop Colenso for a moment. Often, when reading the passage, I used to think that some strange statistical mystery hung over it; for how could a province measuring not more than thirty miles by twenty support such a number of fortified cities, especially when the greater part of it was a wilderness of rocks? But mysterious, incredible as this seemed, on the spot with my own eyes, *I have seen* that it is literally true. The cities are there to this day. Some of them retain the ancient names recorded in the Bible. Porter's *Giant Cities of Bashan.*

Ver. 18-20. *Patriotism. Rest unto your brethren.* He who loathes war and will do everything in his power to avert it, but who will in the last extremity, encounter its perils, from love of country and of home—who is willing to sacrifice himself and all that is dear to him in life, to promote the well-being of his fellow-man, will ever receive a worthy homage.—*Abbott.*

Ver. 21-23. Never in the history of the chosen people, could there have been such a blank as that when they became conscious that "Moses, the servant of the Lord was dead." He who had been their leader, their law-giver, their oracle, as far back as their memory could reach, was taken from them at the very moment when they seemed most to need him. It was to fill up this blank that Joshua was called. The narrative labours to impress upon us the sense that the continuity of the nation and of its high purpose was not broken by the change of person and situation. "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee" (Josh. i. 5). There was indeed, as yet, no hereditary or fixed succession. But the germ of that succession is better represented by the very contrast between Moses and Joshua than in any other passage in the sacred history.—*Stanley.*

Ver. 11. *Og.* King of the district which under the name of Bashan, extended from the Jabbok up to the base of Hermon. There is no direct notice as in the case of Sihon, of his

Ver. 25. *Let me go over.* We wish to live; who can blame us? Life is



sweet ; but if our Maker have ordained that nothing but death can render us glorious, what madness is it to stick at the condition ! Oh, our gross infidelity, if we do not believe that Great

Arbitrer of the world infinitely wise, to know what is best for us ; infinitely merciful, to will what He knows best ; infinitely powerful, to do what He will ! —*Bp. Hall.*

## CHAPTER IV.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—From the mention of what God had done for Israel, Moses passes to the obedience of the law. They were under deep obligation to keep it, and in doing so, consisted their wisdom, greatness, and destiny.

1. Statutes—rules concerning religion and Divine worship. Judgments—civil enactments, public and private. The two denote the whole law in its leading features (Lev. xix, 37).

2. This law must not be altered ; but kept as God's unchangeable word.

Vers. 3, 4. The results of obedience or disobedience had just been seen at Baal-Peor (Num. xxv., 3, 9 ; idolators were destroyed, faithful men remained alive. Followed—a common expression for religious walk and life, cf. Jer. viii. 2 ; ix. 14. Cleave—hold fast to one ; intimate communion and attachment.

Vers. 5, 6. Observance would be their life, enjoyment, and influence upon other nations. Their wisdom would attract as in the case of the Queen of Sheba, the enquiring earnest heathens.

Vers. 7, 8. This attractive force consisted in possessing superior privileges and serving God. "True right has its roots in God, and with the obscuration of the knowledge of God, law, and right, with their divinely established foundations, are also shaken and obscured." cf. Rom. i. 26-32).—*Keil.*

9. Heed. Forget not what has been seen. Keep thy soul, i.e., defend thy life from danger or injury (Prov. xiii. 3 ; xix. 16).

10. The day, the delivery of the law, an era most memorable and never to be forgotten. The leading facts are given.

11. Burned unto the midst, *lit.*, "to the heart of heaven, i.e., quite into the sky, a rhetorical description of the awful majesty of the pillar of fire, in which the glory of the Lord appeared upon Sinai" (*Keil*). Moses seeks to renew the impressions then produced.

12. Voice, utterance of words, but no shape or form was seen.

15. Since no figure of God was seen, beware of making one and acting corruptly.

16. Graven, carved or sculptured in wood, metal, or stone. Similitude, form, idol (2 Chron. xxxiii. 7, 15). Likeness, pattern, model (Ex. xxv. 9, 40).

17, 18. Beast. A warning against animal worship of Egypt, of which they had seen so much.

19. Worship of heavenly bodies was not to beguile them. Driven, constrained or urged (cf. xiii. 13). Divided, not allotted the heathen, or permitted them to worship ; but "whose light God has distributed to the nations for their use and benefit, and which therefore, being creatures ministering to man's conscience, must not be worshipped as man's lords."—*Speak. Com.*

20. Iron furnace, an image of the bondage and intense affliction in Egypt.

Vers. 21-24. Moses again refers to his exclusion from Canaan, and renews the warning not to forget the Covenant, or make graven images. God is a jealous God, and consuming fire, applied with special reference to manifestations in His glory (Ex. xxiv. 17).

Vers. 25-28. Warnings against idolatry enforced by distinct predictions of punishment. Future generations who had not known what they knew would utterly perish. Prolong, (26), to have long life ; here to occupy the land long severed from God they would lose their inheritance. They would be scattered, become few in number compared with those around them (27), and be compelled to serve idols which could neither see nor smell (28).

29. Seek. Israel would then be sensible of sin, would seek and find God (Luke xv. 17).

30. These threatenings and sufferings. Latter, *lit.*, at the end of the days ; the end of captivity, or far distant future.

31. Not forsake, *lit.*, not withdraw his hand (Jos. x. 6) or let loose ; nor cast off (Rom. xi. 1)

Vers. 32-40. To secure obedience, Moses again reminds them of their choice, instruction, deliverance, and guidance.

32. For a reason given, because merciful, Jehovah delivered them. Days past, from earliest times, from the records of all places we read not of such an event.

34. A reference to miracles of deliverance. Assayed, attempted. Temptations, testings, trials, to Pharaoh especially. Signs and wonders, plagues of Egypt (Exod. vii. 3), extraordinary events with a moral design. War, conflict at Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 14; xv. 3.) Terrors, effects on Egyptians, cf. Ps. cv. 27, 38; cvi. 21.

36. Supernatural revelations and method in which they were given emphasized. Instruct, tame, or, bind a bullock (Jer. xxxi. 18), then to discipline; generally to chastise, correct, instruct (Prov. ix. 7).

Vers. 37. All this from love to their fathers. Seed. Abraham's sight, *lit.*, by his face, his presence with them. "My presence (*lit.*, my face) shall go with thee" Exod. xxxiii. 14).

Vers. 41-43. Many regard these verses as an interpolation. "There is, however, no reason to depart from the view suggested alike by their contents and context. The vv. preceding are clearly the conclusion, as those succeeding are the exordium, of a distinct and complete discourse. These vv. then are inserted between the two simply for the reason to which they themselves call attention ("Then Moses severed three cities, etc."), *i.e.*, the fact narrated took place historically after Moses spoke the one discourse and before he delivered the other. In thus severing the three cities of refuge, Moses carried out a previous command of God (Num. xxxv. 14), and so followed up his exhortations to obedience, by setting a punctual example of it as far as opportunity was given him." (*Speak. Com.*)

44. This the law, a preface to the following rehearsal and explanations of the law—"including in fact the central part and substance of the book, which now follows in twenty-two chapters"—with a notice of time and place.

#### HEARING AND OBSERVING THE LAW.—Verses 1-4.

Moses now proceeds to urge practical obedience. The events in their recent history were motives and encouragements to keep the law. These events were related to quicken attention, remind them of their duty, and the benefits of performing it. "Now therefore hearken," etc.

I. The law in its nature. "The statutes and judgments" represent the law in its leading features. 1. *It is Divine in its authority.* "The commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." The voice of God is heard in the words. A revelation of God's will is needful. Man may discover natural laws and reach perfection in science, but God alone can reveal moral duty and teach us to perform it. "Which I teach you." 2. *It is unchangeable in its demands.* It is law, that which is laid down as a permanent rule of life. Human systems are set up and pulled down, altered and violated, but God's commandments remain the same for all ages and for all nations, firm as the everlasting hills, right as the mind of God, and perfect in their requirements. "Ye shall not add unto, nor diminish." 3. *It is adapted to man's moral condition.* In perplexity and restlessness these statutes bind in their authority and purpose. These judgments teach what is right—what is due to God and our fellow-men. In all circumstances, in all relationships, we have a Divine unerring rule of life.

II. The law in its design. "Hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes for to do them, that ye may live." 1. *To give life.* "That ye may live." Life and prosperity depended upon their obedience. Not merely natural life in its measure and enjoyment (chap. v. 33; vi. 2), but spiritual life, that higher life "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." When our conduct accords with the law of God, we find "the highest good, on the largest scale, for the longest period." But life spiritual and eternal are not secured by the law which we have broken. Jesus Christ only gives life and salvation. 2. *To confirm the inheritance.* Obedience was the condition of possessing and continually enjoying the inheritance. Not in numbers and valour, not in the

wisdom of their priests nor the wealth of their princes, but in observing the law of God did their security and prosperity consist. "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers."

**III. The law in its observance.** To give life and secure their possessions the law must be observed in its completeness. "Ye shall not add unto the word, neither shall ye diminish ought." We add by superstition and tradition, we diminish by ritual and creed at our peril. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar." God's law is perfect, and must be kept in its entirety. "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ecc. iii. 14).

**IV. The law enforced by examples.** In their history they had experience of the danger of disobedience and the blessings of obedience. Baal-peor witnessed to the truth and authority of the law and ought to be a warning against apostasy. 1. *Idolators were destroyed.* "All the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed" (cf. Numb. xxv. 3-9). 2. *Faithful followers were preserved alive.* "Ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive, every one of you this day." Thus Divine law is attested by human experience and history. "Your eyes have seen" these things. Take warning and do not provoke God to anger.

#### NATIONAL PRE-EMINENCE.—Verses 5-8.

Israel's relation to God and possession of his laws exalted them above other nations. Loyalty to God would not only give them life, but reputation for wisdom and understanding. Only through God's teaching and blessing had they become a great nation. If they lost a sense of duty and dependence upon Him they would lose their pre-eminence. "Keep, therefore, and do them." We learn how national pre-eminence is attained—

**I. A nation is pre-eminent by enlightening the people through the word of God.** Unto Israel were committed "the oracles of God" and this gave them advantage (Rom. iii. 1, 2). Their national glory and attraction rested on obedience to the "statutes and judgments" which they possessed. If they meditated upon these, practised and taught these, they would be wise, retain their greatness, and exercise moral influence upon surrounding nations. The possession of the Bible and the means of grace; the erection of schools and religious institutions, will not make a nation great. Just laws, true science, and noble institutions to speed them are a great responsibility and privilege. But in reverence for God and His word, in the earnest endeavour to practice its commands, in domestic, social, and political life will be our eminence and prosperity. "For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations."

**II. A nation is pre-eminent by valuing and improving its religious privileges.** "What nation so great, who hath God so nigh unto them" (ver. 7). Moses reminds them of their privileges. But present greatness must not lead them to forget God and their duty. Future prosperity depends upon right use of what they now enjoy. God's nearness should prompt them to worship and obedience. God's righteous judgments should be the ground of their stability and the secret of success. If England disregards the Sabbath, neglects her duty and improves not her religious advantages, no science or legislation can preserve her superiority. Her glory will decay, and it may be more tolerable for rude nations, for Sodom and Gomorrah, at the day of judgment than for her.



**III. A nation is pre-eminent by cherishing a spirit of obedience to God, from whom religious privileges come.** We must not trust to the splendour of our fleet and the valour of our soldiers, nor to the extent of our commerce and the greatness of our empire. Infidelity denies God, and false science ignores Him, but no nation can succeed without God. Robespierre declared "the world cannot be worked without God; and rather than try to work it without God we had better invent a god." God comes near us to be trusted and loved—reveals His spirituality and power to satisfy our need and restrain idolatry, and exalts a nation to dignity and power, that He may be obeyed and honoured. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1, 2. *The dignity of moral law.***

1. Divine in its origin, "which I teach you." 2. Complete in its nature, "not add to, nor diminish from." 3. Practical in its design, nothing speculative or temporary, "for to do them." "There is no greater evidence that Israel had a communication from heaven than this fact—that their morality is so pure, their apprehension of God so sublime, their definition of His nature so august, their whole intercourse with heaven so pure, so holy, so different from anything before or around them, that it seems scarcely possible to escape the conclusion that the Greeks were taught by themselves, that the Jews were the pupils of God."—*Cumming*.

**Ver. 2. *Divine guardianship of the Bible.***

God defends it from alteration according to the tastes and systems of men. Learn—1. The need of preserving its purity and integrity. 2. The danger of tampering with it. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

**Ver. 3. *Baal-peor.***

The facts of history according with human experience in vindicating God's law. "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did." Learn—1. The anger of God in its cause, manifestations, and results. 2. The mercy of God an encouragement to His people. "The allusion to that recent and appalling judgment was seasonably made as a powerful dis-

suasive against idolatry; and the fact mentioned was calculated to make a deep impression on the people who knew and felt the truth of it."

**Ver. 4. *Cleave unto Jehovah.*** 1. Personal attachment. "Ruth *clave* (adhered to, to be close behind), Ruth i. 14. 2. Constant fellowship. 3. Faithful service.

**Vers. 5, 8. *The Bible the wisdom of a nation.*** Consider—I. That the Bible brings greatness to a nation; because—

1. When received and obeyed, it brings God's blessing with it. 2. It elevates the national character. II. That it is the duty of all to have a personal acquaintance with the Scriptures, and to instruct the young in them.—*Rev. S. Hayman, B.A.*

**Vers. 7, 8.** Here he represents their privileges and their duty in such significant and comprehensive terms as were peculiarly calculated to arrest their attention and engage their interest. The former—their national advantages—are described, and they are twofold:—1. God's readiness to hear and aid them at all times; and 2. The excellence of that religion in which they were instructed, set forth in the "statutes and judgments so righteous" which the law of Moses contained. Their duty corresponding to these pre-eminent advantages as a people was also twofold:—1. Their own faithful obedience to that law, and 2. Their obligation to imbue the minds of the young and rising generation with similar sentiments of reverence and respect for it.—*Jamieson's Com. in loco.*

**FORGETFULNESS OF GOD'S LAW.—Verses 9-14.**

God's judgments would benefit Israel only when remembered and reverently obeyed. To aid their obedience they must beware of forgetting the method and the circumstances in which the law was received. They must give personal heed to it and teach it to their children, that generations to come might fear the Lord.

**I. The law of God is given to impress the mind and lead to obedience.** "He commanded you to perform" (ver. 13). God is not indifferent, and we should not be, to the observance of his law. It demands attention, reverence and love. It should be supreme in our thoughts and life. Obedience should not be accidental, superficial work, but an intelligent, constant, direction of the heart and life. If the heart be gained, the whole man is governed—the affections, desires, and powers given up—but if God is forgotten, departs from the heart, he will soon be forsaken and disobeyed. "My son, forget not the law; but let thine heart keep my commandments."

**II. There is a tendency in man to forget and disobey this law** We should not blame infirmity of memory—a special help is provided for that (John xiv. 26)—but wilful forgetfulness of heart. "The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and after conversion to keep it with Him," says Flavel. "What is there that will not entice and allure so fickle a thing as the heart from God?" asks Mede. 1. *To forget, notwithstanding the evidence of the senses.* "Thine eyes have seen" (ver. 9). No length of time should efface such events from the memory. 2. *To forget in the immediate presence of God.* "Thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb" (ver. 10). This presence should check from sin, and prompt to obedience. "That his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. xx. 20). 3. *To forget amid most terrible displays of God's majesty.* 1. *Fire.* "The mountain burned with fire." 2. *Darkness.* "Darkness, clouds, and thick darkness." 3. *Divine voice.* "The Lord spake unto you, ye heard the voice," ver. 12 (*cf.* Ex. xix. 16-18; xx. 18, 22). Such manifestations were intended to impress and benefit the people. This special favour, this awful display, should help them ever to remember and obey.

**III. The means of helping memory and prompting obedience given.** God gives direction, and provides against the dangers of His people. 1. *Personal attention.* "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently" (ver. 9). Religion requires caution, circumspection (Ep. v. 15), and personal care. Those cannot walk safely who walk carelessly. Such are the assaults without and the evils within, that we have to take care lest personal obedience should be forgotten. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, *lit.*, above all keeping" (Prov. iv. 23). 2. *Teaching the children.* "That they may teach their children" (ver. 10). Parents are depositors of the knowledge and law of God, and must teach and transmit them to their sons. The truth of God must mould the hearts of the rising generations, and be handed down to future ages. "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

## THE DANGERS OF IDOLATRY.—Verses 15-19.

Israel were to take heed, and neither to forget the covenant of God, nor offend Him by image worship. He had not been manifested to them in any form or representation. They were therefore to worship Him without any graven image or likeness, in a method corresponding to His spiritual nature.

**I. Idolatry in its forms.** Man has always felt his separation from, and craved for friendship with God. Failing to discover Him, human nature in its distress has made a desperate effort to realise God in gold and silver, in forms and ideas. But God has revealed Himself to man in His word and in His Son. Yet, strange to say, such is the perversity of our hearts, that we carve our own images, set up our own idols and cry, "These be thy gods." Three forms of idolatry are given. 1. *Man worship*: "The likeness of male or female." Ancestors and national leaders have been deified. Men have practised, and do now practice hero-worship, and set up their household gods (*Penates*). All superstitious reverence for any of our race is here forbidden. Worship God and not man. 2. *Animal worship*. This was common in Egypt. *Birds*, like the ibis and hawk; *four-footed beasts*, like the ox, dog, and cat; and *creeping things*, like the serpent, crocodile, and beetle (*cf.* Rom. i. 23), were prevalent forms of idolatry. 3. *Nature worship*. The light of sun and moon was distributed to the nations for their benefit, ministered to their convenience, and were therefore not to be revered. The heavenly bodies were regarded as symbols of deities, and Israel was in danger of being seduced by their worship. "In a word," says *Dean Goulborn*, "idolatry (or the surrounding the creature with the attributes of the Creator) is the original fundamental sin of man—the point of departure from which man started on the downward course, until he reached the lowest depths of wickedness"—Who changed (exchanged) the truth of (*i.e.*, concerning) God into a lie (an idol, or falsehood) and worshipped (adored) and served (in rites and ceremonies) the creature (in various forms) more than (often along with, and without) the Creator, who is blessed for ever." Rom. i. 25.

**II. Idolatry in its consequences.** Men ever possessed a knowledge of the existence and attributes of God, but the affections have prevented the mind from discerning and preserving the truth taught by nature and "manifest in them" (Rom. i. 20). God was not recognised and glorified. Darkness and idolatry followed the rejection of light, and terrible were the consequences. 1. *Idolatry degrades the Divine nature*. God is invisible, and cannot be represented by images; spiritual, and should not be materialised; omnipresent, and must not be localised. An infinite spiritual and Divine nature can never become finite, material and human. To make any image of God is to lower and degrade Him. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (sculptured by art and ingenuity of man), Acts xvii. 29. 2. *Idolatry corrupts human nature*. "Lest ye corrupt yourselves" (ver. 16). We are children of God, and our filial relation protests against idolatry. What is spiritual in us can never be pencilled or carved. Spirituality is lost by representing it in sense; and since man is corrupt, cannot make a god superior to himself, and ever becomes like the object he worships; how foolish, how degrading is idolatry! "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them" (Psa. cxv. 8). 3. *Idolatry perils human life*. This truth is confirmed in the life of Moses (ver. 21), the history of Israel and heathen nations. God is the source of *natural life*, but if forsaken, this life is cut off from its source and centre and shortened by vice. *Spiritual*



life can never be sustained in power and beauty away from God. "Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves" (ver. 15).

"Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone  
To rev'rence what is ancient, and can plead  
A course of long observance for its use,  
That even servitude, the worst of ills,  
Because deliver'd down from sire to son,  
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing."—*Cowper*.

### THE IRON FURNACE.—Verse 20.

A furnace for smelting iron was round in shape, often thirty feet deep, requiring heat most intense. In this figure we have a type of—

**I. Intense Affliction.** Israel in Egypt were grievously afflicted, had to serve in bondage and under cruel taskmasters. "They made their lives bitter," and all "their service, wherein they made them serve, was with vigour" (Ex. i. 11–14). God often sends affliction deep and most severe. Deliverance is like rescue from the fire. "I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace" (Jer. xi. 4).

**II. Benevolent Design.** This furnace is kindled and tempered for some merciful purpose. 1. *Real discipline.* "What need," asks Philip Henry, "have the people of God of afflictions? The same that our bodies have of physic; that trees have of pruning; that gold and silver have of the furnace." God thus purifies our character and fits us for his service. 2. *Preparation for usefulness.* "To be unto Him a people of inheritance." A people holy, honourable, and useful. "Suppose, Christian, the furnace to be seven times hotter, it is but to make you seven times better; fiery trials make golden Christians."—*Dyer*.

Eminent usefulness on earth, and heaven with its glory, are gained through chastened sufferings. Richard Boyle, earl of Cork, rose from the humblest station to the highest rank in life. After passing through strange and most trying circumstances he adopted as his motto, and had engraved upon his tomb the words, "God's providence is my inheritance." "We went through fire and through water (greatest trials); but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place (*lit.*, well-watered place; abundance of blessings)" (Ps. lxi. 12).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 15. Take heed.** These many cautions note our proneness to this evil above others. This appeareth somewhat in children so delighted with pictures, and in that *idolomania* of these Jews, of the eastern churches, and of the synagogue of Rome.—*Trapp*.

**Ver. 19. Sun, moon, and stars.** Note 1. The use and design in the heavenly bodies, given for the benefit of all mankind (Gen. i. 14–18; Ps. civ. 19). Hence cannot be appropriated to one people, and absurd to worship as God's

what are intended to be servants to man. 2. The proneness of man to put the creature in the place of the Creator. "Lest thou shouldest be driven," *i.e.*, drawn or constrained; by *sense*, "when thou seest the sun"; by *customs* of other nations, and by *natural tendency*. Objects of nature should be viewed with admiration, gratitude, and love. Nature should lead up to Nature's God. But what proneness in man to abuse these gifts; to ignore God and degrade ourselves!

"The landscape has His praise, but not its author."

Ver. 20. *A people of inheritance.* This special relationship is—1. A protest against idolatry. 2. An argument for gratitude and obedience. To abandon God's worship for gross and debasing idolatry would be greatest folly and shameless ingratitude. 3. A reason for purity and spirituality of worship. *People of inheritance.* 1. Purchased or acquired by God. Israel is viewed as God's own by a long series of mighty deeds performed for their deliverance. Hence said to be "redeemed"

(Ex. vi. 6) or "purchased" (Ex. xv. 16). 2. Owned by God. A possession which God has gained specially for Himself. 3. Should therefore be devoted to God alone. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar *treasure* (*segullah*—valuable property—1 Chr. xxix. 3; Ecc. ii. 8) unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine," Ex. xix. 5; (*cf.* Mal. iii. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 9).

### WARNINGS IN PERSONAL HISTORY.—*Verses 21, 22.*

Deliverance from Egypt reminds Moses that God did not permit *him* to enter Canaan. His punishment ought to be a warning to them. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." Learn—

I. **Impressive events occur in Personal History.** Every life is filled with such events. Our sins, overruled by God's sovereign mercy or displeasure, deprive us of gaining honours and possessions. Times and seasons are fixed, made impressive by special displays from God. With sorrow we "remember the days of darkness," and looking back exclaim in submission "I must die in this land."

II. **These impressive events in Personal History a warning to others.** Our personal sufferings are not only profitable to ourselves but may be to others. "I have sinned and have been punished" says Moses "for your sake." "You are privileged to enter Canaan and I am not. Beware, therefore, and provoke not God as I did through unbelief." "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant."

### WARNINGS AGAINST IDOLATRY.—*Verses 23, 24.*

The people are warned anew against forsaking God, who is jealous for his glory, and making and worshipping graven images. "Take heed," etc.—

I. **Idolatry shows base ingratitude to God.** God had done wonderful things for Israel. They had resolved not to forget Him, yet how ungrateful and prone to go astray! No miraculous displays without can eradicate evils within. How great has God's goodness been to us, yet how thoughtless and ungrateful have we been! Forgetful of His presence, precepts, and providence! "How unsuitable is it for us who live only by kindness (Tit. iii. 4-7) to be unthankful," says Edwards.

II. **Idolatry violates God's commands.** "Which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee." God's law demands our love, dethrones our lusts, and requires constant and unswerving obedience. To forget is to ignore God, and to live as if He did not exist. Thus men refuse submission, throw off allegiance to God, and choose idols. "How oft did they rebel against Him." <sup>137</sup>

III. **Idolatry rouses God's anger.** "The Lord thy God is a consuming

fire," etc. Anger is not the natural feeling of God towards man. "God is love." What then causes the wrath of God? It is God's righteous opposition to sin. He is jealous for His honour, and will not spare those guilty of idolatry. "For the wrath of God is revealed (in the moral government of the world) from heaven against all ungodliness (sin against God), and unrighteousness (sin against man) of men, who hold (keep down) the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18)

#### PUNISHMENTS OF APOSTACY.—Verses 25–28.

Warnings against idolatry are enforced by predicted punishments upon future generations who should turn from Jehovah and corrupt themselves by idolatry. Canaan was granted on condition of constant obedience. If they forsook God their title to the land would be forfeited. They would be diminished in number, dispersed among the heathen and compelled to serve dumb idols, so that their choice would become their punishment.

**I. Evils would be entailed upon future generations.** Nature, like a Nemesis, follows transgressors afar. The sources of life cannot be poisoned without the stream being affected. "Children's children" might remain long in the land, but they would inherit the tendencies and suffer for the sins of their progenitors. The family of Saul suffered for his great malice against David. Achan perished not alone in his iniquity (Josh. xxii. 20). Thus God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

**II. National life would be destroyed.** Severed from God they would lose their inheritance, and cease to be a chosen people. 1. *They would be reduced in number.* "Ye shall be left few in number." 2. *They would be scattered among other nations.* "The Lord shall scatter you among the nations"—as in the captivity of Babylon. The author had in view, says Keil, "all the dispersions which would come upon the rebellious nation in future times, even down to the dispersion under the Romans, which continues still; so that Moses contemplated the punishment in its fullest extent." 3. *They would be rejected as a people.* "Ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed." This has been fulfilled in the uprooting of all the tribes of Israel, in their dispersion through all nations, and in the miseries they have endured. What a solemn warning to those who forsake God.

**III. Retributive consequences would follow.** They would become perfect slaves to other peoples, and forced to render homage to senseless idols. As their sin, so their punishment. They had dishonoured God by graven images, so they would be degraded by service to abominable idols. Evils which we esteem pleasures at first, often become our tyrants, and drag us down to misery. If we make indulgences our gods, they will become our degradation. "They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them."

"Oh, blind to truth, and God's whole scheme below,  
Who fancy bliss to vice; to virtue, woe."—Pope.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF TRIBULATION.—Verses 27–30.

If Israel in their dispersion and trouble turn with all their hearts to God he will deliver them and not utterly cast them off. He is merciful as well as jealous, and mindful of the covenant which he swore unto their fathers (cf. Lev. xxvi. 40–42; Neh. ix. 31).

**I. Afflictions are corrective in their design.** "Whither the Lord shall lead



you." God not only permitted Israel to be carried off, but lead them into other lands, gently and kindly led them with special design (ver. 27). It is a mercy to be corrected when we might have been destroyed. Afflictions, exile and disappointment are intended to check our sins and preserve our souls. "None is more unhappy," says Seneca, "than he who never felt adversity."

II. Afflictions are tempered with mercy in their character. Fallen angels were left to their eternal doom; but sinful man is kept from destruction, corrected, and brought back to God. Backsliders may be punished, but God will forgive. "Mercy rejoiceth (glorieth, triumphs over) against judgments" (Jas. ii. 13).

III. Afflictions are blessed in their results. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him." They often lead to repentance, removal of sin, and return to God. From the deepest distress and the most distant apostasy God brings His children. David went astray before he was afflicted. Manasseh long forsook God, but sought His face when put in sore distress, and the prodigal returned to his father's house when he felt his helpless, lost condition. King Alfred prayed that God would often send him sickness to keep him obedient and devout. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 24. *God a consuming fire.* There are stern aspects of God as well as mild. The figure of fire sets forth the anger of God against sin. 1. How kindled. 2. Material to keep it alive. 3. The difficulty of extinguishing it; and 4. The fearful consumption it makes—swift and overwhelming destruction. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29).

*God a jealous God.* Jealousy applied to God does not mean suspicion, but readiness to vindicate His glory and law. "Not in the sense in which He was regarded as 'jealous' by some of the Greeks, who supposed that success or eminence of any kind provoked Him (Herod iii. 40, 125), but jealous of His own honour," one who will not see "His glory given to another (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11), or allow rivals to dispute His sole and absolute sovereignty" (cf. Ex. xxiv. 14; Deut. v. 9; vi. 15; Josh. xxiv. 19). Hence jealous. 1. For His glory. 2. For the purity of His worship; and 3. For His people. *Jealous.* And should therefore be served truly, that there be no halting; and totally that there be no halving (Heb. xii. 28, 29).

—Trapp.

Vers. 25, 28. *Remained long in the land.* 1. The condition of possessing it. 2. The danger of forgetting this condition. Carnally secure and forsaking God, and growing old in the land. 3. The punishment that would follow from this forgetfulness. (a) Forewarned. Heaven and earth witness. (b) Severe dispersion and degradation.

Ver. 26. Heaven and earth—1. Witness for God's existence. 2. Warning against sin. 3. Testify to His righteousness in punishing transgression.

Vers. 29–31. Israel's sin, misery repentance, and restoration.

Ver. 29. I. *Seeking God.* 1. Earnestly; with all thy heart. 2. Intelligently; with all thy soul. II. *Inducements to seek God.* 1. Merciful in Himself. 2. Mindful of His promise; and 3. Able to help in tribulation. "Sweet and sour make the best sauce. Promises and menaces mixed soonest operate upon the heart. The sun of righteousness loves not to be set in a cloud, nor the God of consolation to have his children comfortless."—Trapp.

## DAYS THAT ARE PAST.—Verses 32-34.

Moses reminds Israel of God's goodness and miraculous dealings in their choice, deliverance, and instruction. Remembrance of days past should prompt them to obedience and love.

**I. Days past reveal the special goodness of God.** God has not left the world to chance and inflexible laws. Nothing can surprise or thwart Him. He rules all creatures and events, showing mercy to those that love Him, and punishing those who rebel against Him. 1. *In creating them.* Our natural birth and regeneration are the acts of Divine mercy. "The Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee (fashioned into shape) O Israel" (Is. xliii. 1). 2. *In delivering them from danger.* As Israel were rescued from Egypt, God's people now are redeemed from enemies by wonderful and extraordinary ways, "with an outstretched arm, and with great judgment" (Ex. vi. 6). 3. *In teaching them by various ways.* Each age has its own special revelations. In the Bible we have a record "of days that are past" in patriarchal, prophetic, and apostolic truth. God's faithfulness and mercy are written unmistakably and should be read most devoutly in those wondrous days.

**II. Days past are filled with warnings and examples.** "History is philosophy teaching by examples." Jewish history is full of instructive lessons. They enjoyed mercies never given to any other nation, or grace never heard of since the creation of the world. These deeds brighten days of old and make them powerful now. They are the gifts of God to the present age, and the lives of good men and bad men are for all time.

"There is a history in all men's lives

Figuring the nature of the times deceased."—*Shakespeare.*

**III. Days past should be remembered for future instruction.** Human experience should not be forgotten. We should be more virtuous and obedient as days roll on. Every age should be an advance upon the past, and should be more powerful for good. It is sad when in the life of a nation, or the life of a man, God is forsaken, and former days lamented for as better than the present. In former days men lived long, were specially trained, and have handed down their treasures to posterity. "Enquire I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of (the records) their fathers. For (the reason given) we are but of yesterday and know nothing, (compared to them) because our days upon earth are a shadow. Shall not they teach thee and tell thee (how God deals with men in this world) and utter words out of their heart (wise sayings result of careful observation) Job. viii. 8.

There is something very solemn in the thought of "days that are past"—past, never to return; while their moral results remain for ever as subjects of future responsibility. We have to reckon on days past; for time, like tide, stays for no man.

"Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,

And ask them what report they bore to heaven;

And how they might have borne more welcome news."

Let us then summon our past days, and ask what they have to say. First, concerning *the world*. Mrs. Savage remarks, "I never knew any of the people of the world praise it at parting." No wonder at this. They have been too much in it, seen too much of it, and been too much deceived by it to recommend to others. Solomon's verdict is, "Vanity of vanities"—"vanity" if they succeed, and "vexation of spirit" if disappointed. What a miserable

painted cheat is the world! Enough to induce us to forsake it, and comply with the admonition. "Forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding." Secondly, ask what they have to say *concerning ourselves*. Have they not shown us many things with which we were formerly unacquainted, and filled us with surprise and regret. How many convictions violated, how many resolutions broken! Life has been very unlike the picture our early imagination drew—our dependences often proved broken reeds, not only unable to sustain hopes, but have "pierced us through with many sorrows." Will days not tell us that life has been a chequered scene? Review them again under a sense of unworthiness of the least mercy, and of all the truth which God has shown us. If we have been in the wilderness, have we not found grace in the sanctuary? Have we not had the fiery cloudy pillar to guide us, manna to sustain us, and waters to refresh us? Can we refuse to say, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life?"—*Jay*.

INDUCEMENTS TO OBEDIENCE.—*Verses 32–38.*

If God has performed such wonderful things for His people, they were put under obligations of gratitude and love. They should ever obey Him for mercies and privileges unknown to other people.

**I. They were remarkable in their history.** Their calling, deliverance, and whole history was full of the supernatural. 1. *They had been delivered from bondage most terrible.* Egypt is a type of sin in its misery and power. But God's power is greater than Satan and sin. When God "assayed to go," deliverance was sure. 2. *Delivered in a way most striking.* By temptations—judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people to test or try them; by signs—tokens of the supernatural in their nature and design; by wonders—the objective side of miracle, the extraordinary and marvellous; by war—conflict at the Red Sea (*cf.* Ex. xiv. 14; xv. 3); by a *mighty hand and stretched out arm* (Ex. vi. 6; xiv. 8; Deut. xxvi. 8); and by *great terrors* in the minds of Egyptians through Divine operations (Ps. cv. 27, 28; cvi. 21). 3. Hence *deliverance unsurpassed.* Such had never been heard of from the beginning of the world (ver. 32). It was unexampled in method and purpose. All to prove the sovereign love and grace of God. The experience and history of God's people outstrip the discipline of ancient Israel. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul."

**II. They were wonderful in their training.** They were inspired with salutary fear, impressed with the awful signs of God's presence which shadow forth the majesty of His nature. 1. *Trained supernaturally.* They heard a voice direct from heaven in condescension to their moral condition and mental capacity. 2. *Trained with awful symbols.* God spoke to His children by sensible signs to impress their minds. What more terrible than thunder and lightning, smoke and flames of fire! Surely we should love Him "whose terror should not make us afraid." 3. *Trained with a special design.* "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (ver. 35).

**III. They were providential in their settlement.** They were dearer to God than any other people. Nations were driven out from their lands; Egyptians and Canaanites were given for their ransom, and people "greater and mightier" than they were, had to prepare them a settlement. God locates his people, prepares their possessions, and Israel's foes must contribute to Israel's welfare. "Thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; thou



didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them," etc. (Psa. xliv. 2, 3).

### JEHOVAH GOD ALONE.—*Verses 39, 40.*

Because God had loved their fathers, and had chosen, redeemed, and settled them in Canaan, Israel were to "consider," never to forget this, and acknowledge that Jehovah alone is God and that there is no other in the universe beside Him.

**I. Jehovah alone is the self-existent personal God.** This great truth was revealed to the Jews by the destruction of heathen deities, the punishment of their worshippers, and the wonderful events in their history. God is one supreme intelligent being. **1. Alone in His supremacy in heaven and earth.** "God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath." When the might of worldly power was strongest, and idolatry as a system was prevalent, "all the gods of the nations" were declared "idols" (*lit., vanities or nullities*) Ps. xcvi. 5. They were denied superiority and even existence. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Ps. xcv. 3). **2. Alone in His government of the world.** Not a *petty* God inferior to heathen gods; but without rival and companion. His government is supreme, not divided among "gods many and lords many;" universal, over all agencies and all spheres; and sole in its authority and design. **3. Alone in His claims upon men.** He demands and deserves universal obedience. We are to love Him with all our hearts. But how could we love God if He were not a person? He is not a set of principles nor code of laws; but the true and living God, infinitely distant from finite creatures, yet definitely related to us as law-giver and father. Hence spring His claims upon us, and our duty towards Him. We should render to Him gratitude, praise, and loyal obedience, "for the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised."

**II. The practical recognition of this truth.** "Know therefore this day." Know not simply intellectually or theoretically, but practically. "Consider it in *thine heart*." Speculation abounds, science puts forth its "laws" and "natural forces," and men talk about abstract principles as "infinite wisdom" and "almighty power." Take away a personal God, a loving father; then we are left like children in the orphan asylum—clothed, fed, and governed, perhaps, but objects of pity rather than of love and mercy. We have no resting-place for our affections, no object of worship, and no hope of purity and peace. How needful then, in "this day" of infidelity and irreligion to receive and defend this truth. **1. In its influence upon the heart.** "In *thine heart*," the centre and regulative power of life. **2. In its influence upon the life.** "Thou shalt keep His statutes" (ver. 40). Our obedience must spring from love, and be voluntary, absolute, and universal. The preacher sums up the *whole of man*; not *duty* only, but happiness and all that concerns him "in fearing God and keeping His commandments" (Ecc. xii. 13).

### THE CITIES OF REFUGE.—*Verses 41–43.*

Israel were yet on the east side of Jordan, and after the conclusion of one discourse (iv. 1–40) Moses inserts these verses before the other (ver. 1, etc.) "In thus severing the three cities of refuge he carried out a previous command of God (Num. xxxv. 14), and so followed up his exhortations to obedience by setting a punctual example of it, as far as opportunity was given him." Consider—

**I. The design of these cities.** "That the slayer might flee thither, who should kill his neighbour unawares." They were not to shelter the guilty from punishment, but to secure a fair trial and respite from death. The accidental homicide was protected from the avenger of blood. They set forth—1. *God's regard for human life.* Life was not to be cut down at random. Private revenge was to be checked, and feelings of humanity were to be cultivated. 2. *God's legislative wisdom.* In the rude unsettled state of the nation, rights were restricted to certain persons, opportunities were given of establishing innocence, and grievances were removed by the vindication of law. Men were taught to discriminate between one crime and another, and justice was administered with mercy. 3. *They typify refuge in Jesus Christ.* In these sanctuaries fugitives were safe; certain decrees confirmed their security. To these cities manslayers were directed to run. Often they had to flee for life with not a moment to spare. Men are guilty, exposed to justice, and can find no safety from the terrors of broken law, except in Christ Jesus. Here is safety and perfect redemption for all "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

**II. The influence of these cities.** They would consecrate the land, and prevent its stain from innocent blood. They would confirm and strengthen the possessions taken from the Canaanites, and lay the foundation for just government. They proved the goodness of God, and helped to cultivate a mild and forgiving spirit towards man.

#### THE REPETITION OF DIVINE LAW.—Verse 44-47.

These verses begin an address which embraces "the central part and substance of the book, which now follows in twenty-two chapters." They contain a fuller description of the law, with a notice of time and place in which the address was given.

**I Law clearly explained.** "In ver. 45, this 'law' (*thōrah*) is summarily described as consisting of 'testimonies, statutes, and judgments;' i.e., commandments considered first as manifestations or attestations (*eydōth*) of the will of God; next, as duties of moral obligation (*khūkim*), and thirdly, as precepts securing the mutual rights of men (*mishpātim*)."—*Sp. Com.* The law is repeated and explained that we may know what is due to God and our fellow-creatures, and that obedience tends to happiness and life.

**II. Law enforced by reasonable claims.** In urging the people to obey the statutes of God, Moses had powerful motives. 1. *They were in better circumstances.*—Not at the foot of Sinai, amidst thunder, fire, and smoke, but on the borders of the promised land. 2. *God's goodness had been displayed to them.* (a) Their enemies had been slain. Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites "whom Moses and the children of Israel smote." (b) "They had already received the first fruits of those promises, the full fruition of which was to be consequent on their fulfilment of that covenant now again about to be rehearsed to them in its leading features." (c) Hence their surroundings were comfortable, bright and merciful "under the springs of Pisgah." Such experience, history, and privileges, put them under the deepest obligation! God's claims are great upon us. But "one great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of our Creator," says Paley, "is the very extensiveness of his bounty."

## THE AMORITES DISPOSSESSED.—Verses 44–49.

The importance of the defeat of the two kings of the Amorites leads Moses again to mention it. Israel must never forget that God had given them this possession, not through their own merits, but in fulfilment of His promise. We may learn from this oft-repeated reference—

I. That the continued existence and prosperity of a nation depend upon its virtue and obedience to God. Not upon its wealth, population or defences; cities, fleets and armies can be swept away when God is forsaken.

II. That when virtue and obedience are wanting God often dispossesses a nation. Splendid dynasties have fled into exile; thrones most powerful have been overturned, and God has extirpated one people to prepare for another. This is—1. A natural law. 2. A fact in history; and 3. A warning to us. "The Lord will rend the kingdom from us, and give it to a neighbour of ours that is better than we are" (1 Sam. xv. 28).

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 39. *Consider it*, etc. 1. God's law has little influence upon the heart and life. Its precepts apt to glide from our memory. 2. Meditation is needful to remind us. "Consider it (*lit.* bring back) into thine heart." "Meditation is the bellows of the affections; 'while I was musing the fire burned' (Ps. xxxix. 3). 'The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.' (Watson). 3. God gives help in this meditation—(a) By special times "This day." (b) By special subjects "Know that the Lord is God." (c) By special requests "I command thee."

Ver. 40. *With thy children*. The benefit of obedience. 1. To the present generation—"It may go well with thee." 2. To the future generation—"Thy children after thee."

Vers. 41–43. The cities of refuge in their names, purpose and situation.

Ver. 44–45. The law. 1. In its minute description. 2. In the peculiar circumstances or place of its repetition. (a) "Over against Beth-peor."—In dangerous proximity to the idol temple of Moab. (b) In new territories.—In the land of Sihon."

Ver. 49. *The Springs of Pisgah*, fertilizing the land may suggest a discourse on the joys and various advantages that flow from heavenly prospects. How much the present life is benefitted and beautified by thoughts and purposes that flow from views of the heavenly life. Every true Pisgah in our life, *i.e.*, every point of exalted meditation, should be a fountain-head of holy thoughts and action.—*Bib. Museum*.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1–4. *Hearken*. How much more doth it concern us to be hearers ere we offer to be teachers of others. He gathers that hears, he spends that teacheth. If we spend before we gather we shall soon prove bankrupts.—(*Bp.*

*Hall*). "That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace to hear meekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit."



Vers. 5, 6.—*Statutes*. Look not for another Master, thou hast the oracles of God. No one teaches like them. Ignorance of the Scriptures is the cause of all evils.—(*Chrysostom*). There is no book on which we can rest in a dying moment but the bible.—*Selden*.

Vers. 7, 8. So great. The Jews were more than the *capsarii nostri* and librarians; they had anticipative advantages, and were to be the first to enjoy the gospel privileges, as well as to be the almoners of Messianic blessings to the world (Rom. iii. 2). They were like trustees of an estate who were themselves to receive the ground-rents till such time as the leases fill in, and then they were both to participate in the increased rent roll and to be the channel through which the other heirs were to share the inheritance with themselves.—*Neil*.

Ver. 8. When the African prince enquired from our gracious queen the secrets of England's glory, she handed him a copy of the Scriptures, and said, "*That is the secret of England's greatness.*"

Ver. 9. *Teach them*. "A pious education is the best way of providing for a family and the surest foundation for its prosperity."

Vers. 9-14. *Lest thou forget*. 'Tis a general fault, that the most common and frequent, the most obvious and conspicuous favours of God, the constant rising of the sun upon us, the descent of fruitful showers, the recourse of temperate seasons, the continuance of our life, the helps of obtaining virtue and becoming happy, we commonly little mind or regard, and consequently seldom return thanks for them.—*Dr. Barrow*.

Vers. 15-18. *Similitude*. It was not until the days of Hebrew decline that a narrow literalism pressed the words into an absolute prohibition of the arts of painting and sculpture. Moses himself sanctioned the cherubic

forms above the mercy-seat; the brazen serpent, and the lillies and pomegranates of the golden candlestick. Solomon had lions on the steps of his throne, oxen under his "molten sea," and palm trees, flowers, and cherubims on the walls of the temple, "within and without" (1 Kings vi. 29). What this commandment forbade was the worship of God under a material form. It asserted the spirituality of Jehovah. While in the rest of the world there was scarcely a single nation or tribe which did not "make to itself" images of the gods, and regard the images themselves with superstitious veneration. In Judaism alone was this seductive practice disallowed. God would have no likeness made of Him, no representation that might cloud the conception of his entire separation from matter, his purely spiritual essence.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*.

Ver. 19. *Heaven*. Instead of stretching our thoughts to the mystery of creation, and soaring above the stars, when we think of God, which for the most part, is setting Him at a distance from us, it may be of great use to consider Him, as present in the room or little spot where we are, and as it were circumscribed within it, in all His glory, majesty, and purity.—*Adam*.

Ver. 23. *Forbidden*. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious.—*Bacon*.

Ver. 24. *Jealous*. Many attempts have been made to show that jealousy is unworthy of the Divine nature; but that the one only God, if there be but one only God, should claim and exact under some penalties an undivided allegiance is natural, reasonable, and in harmony with the most exalted conceptions of the Divine essence. If God looked with indifference upon idolatry, it would imply that He cared little for His human creatures; that like the Deity of Epicurius having once created man and the world, He thenceforth

paid no attention to them.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*).

**Ver. 25. *Corrupt.*** The heathen corruptions were produced and sanctioned by the heathen mythology and idolatry; while Christian nations are corrupt in spite of and in direct opposition to Christianity, which raises the highest standard of virtue and acts continually on the world as a purifying and sanctifying power.—*P. Schaff*.

"God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man."—*Shakespeare*.

**Ver. 26. *Witness.*** There was never miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God. *Bacon*.

**Ver. 27-30. *Tribulation.*** Afflictions are God's furnace, by which He cleanses His people from their dross. As gold and silver are refined, so men are purified. The process is never complete so long as any dross remains. As Tennyson suggestively says—

"Life is not like idle ore;  
But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated not with burning fears,  
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered with the shocks of doom,  
To shape and use."

**Vers. 33, 36.** The phenomena accumulated to impress the people seem to have been loud thunder, fierce flashes of lightning, a fire that streamed up from the mountain to the middle of the sky, dense volumes of smoke pro-

ducing an awful and weird darkness, a trembling of the mountain as by a continuous earthquake, a sound like the blast of a trumpet loud and prolonged, and then, finally, a clear, penetrating voice (*cf. Ex. xix. 16-20*). So awful a manifestation has never been made at any other place or time (*ver. 32*), nor will be until the consummation of all things.—*Com. for Eng. Readers*.

**Ver. 39. *Lord.*** He is not only "God," but "the Lord" or Governor. We know Him only by His properties, by the wise and admirable structure of things around us, and by their final causes; we admire Him on account of His perfections; we venerate and worship Him on account of His government.—*Sir Isaac Newton*.

**Vers. 41-43.** Cities of refuge were appointed—three on each side of Jordan—with straight and good roads leading to them from every direction, to any of which the murderer might fly; and if he got into it before the avenger overtook him, he was safe from his rage until he had a fair trial. If it was found that he was guilty of wilful murder, he was delivered up to the avenger to be destroyed, and not even the altar was allowed to protect him; but if it was found that the murder had not been intentional, he was allowed to remain in the city of refuge, where none might come to do him evil; and on the death of the high priest he might return in security to his own home.—*Dr. Cox*.

## CHAPTER V.

**CRITICAL REMARKS.**—The Deuteronomy, or second law, is now given and enforced. But Moses refers to the covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel, and recapitulates the Sinaitic code in its most important features.

**Ver. 1.** Moses called marks the publicity and importance of the address.

**Ver. 2.** Our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but with the nation as an organic whole, those identified with the people who entered into the covenant at Sinai.

**Ver. 4.** Face to face, not in visible form, but familiarly, near as one person to another.

Ver. 5. Even as regards the Decalogue this statement has its application. Moses "stood between the Lord and them" whilst it was delivered, and perhaps it was (Ex. xix. 19) addressed directly to Moses, though in accents audible to the assembly beneath. Thus was the law, including even the "Ten Words," "in the hands of a mediator" (Gal. iii. 19).—*Sp. Com.*

Ver. 6. An introduction to the commandments which follow, and which are given with slight verbal alteration the same as in Ex. xx.

Vers. 7-16. First table of the Law.

Ver. 7. Before me, *lit.* beyond me (Gen. xlviii. 22; Ps. xvi. 2), in addition to me (Gen. xxxi. 50; Deut. xix. 9); meaning by the side of me, or in my presence.

Ver. 8. All symbolic representations prohibited. *Heaven*, stars or birds; *earth*, all kinds of animals; *water*, fish and water creatures.

Ver. 9. Jealous, who gives not to another honour due to himself (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11), nor tolerates the worship of any idol. *Visiting*, not *charging* the iniquity, but permitting its consequences to flow beyond persons or nations committing it.

Ver. 10. The third and fourth generation are *punished* (visited); but *mercy* is shown to the thousandth.

Ver. 11. In vain, *lit.*, lift up the name of Jehovah thy God in vain. Lift up, take up a proverb (Num. xxiii. 7), a song (Ps. lxxxi. 3), or a prayer (Is. xxxvii. 3). All employment of God's name for vain and unworthy purposes forbidden; not merely false swearing; but profane and idle swearing in daily life. *Guiltless*, left unpunished.

Vers. 12-15. Sabbath, already in existence has to be *sanctified* (a festival-keeper, Ex. xvi. 23) to be observed a day of rest, belonging to the Lord and consecrated to Him. Neither man nor beast to work. "The exhortation is pointed by reminding the people that they too were formerly servants themselves. The bondage in Egypt and the deliverance from it are not assigned as grounds for the institution of the Sabbath, which is of far older date (*cf.* Gen. ii. 3); but rather as suggesting motives for the religious observance of that institution. The exodus was an entrance into rest from the toils of the house of bondage, and is thought actually to have occurred on the Sabbath day. Hence arose special and national obligations with respect to the Sabbath, on which it is exactly within the scope of Moses' purpose in Deuteronomy to insist."—*Sp. Com.*

Ver. 16. Well with thee. An insertior not in Ex. xx. 11, but found in Ep. vi. 3, and amplifying the promise of long life.

Vers. 17-21. Second table of the law. The enactments are from outward deeds (*kill, adultery, steal*), to words, (false witness and lies) to inward desires (*covet and desire*).

Ver. 22. Added, *lit.*, "He did not add," *i.e.*, He spoke no more with the great voice directly to the people, but addressed all other communications to them through Moses.

Vers. 23-33. Here we have a fuller account than that in Ex. xx. 18-21. God's reply (vers. 18-31) to the people's request is not given in the summary of Exodus. The people were alarmed at the awful phenomena in which God revealed His glory and uttered His will; entreated Moses to stand between as mediator, that they might not die, and then promised to hear and obey. God approved the request, because it indicated a feeling of unfitness for intercourse with Him, but added—

Vers. 28, 29. "Would that they always had this feeling—this heart in them to fear me, that it might be well with them and their children."

Vers. 30, 31. The people are directed to their tents; Moses is appointed mediator, to whom God would give all law for the people.

Vers. 32, 33. Events are brought to a close by an exhortation to careful observance of the commandments, never to turn aside, right or left, from the way pointed out, that it may be well with them (*cf.* cp. iv. 40).

### THE COVENANT IN HOREB.—Verses 1-5.

Moses was about to recapitulate the law. It was fitting to remind them of the circumstances in which it was given, and the special relation between God and His people.



**I. The method in which the covenant was given.** Jewish and other writers have speculated on this subject, but we can only reconcile the various statements in Old and New Testaments (Ex. xx. 2; Deut. v. 4; cf. Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2) by remembering the spirituality of God, and His special agency in the revelation of His will. From this narrative we learn that—1. *The covenant was specially made with them.* “The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers.” It is specially with us, a covenant not of circumcision (Acts vii. 8) but ten commandments. Light gradually shines, and children know more of God’s will than their forefathers. 2. *The covenant was given familiarly to them.* “The Lord talked with you face to face,” as one friend with another. Not in dreams and dark visions as of old (Job iv. 12, 13), but directly, openly and clearly. 3. *The covenant was given amid divine splendour.* “Out of the midst of the fire.” The natural phenomena and peculiar surroundings were intended to impress their minds and beget right feelings and willing obedience. 4. *The covenant was given through a mediator.* “I stood between the Lord and you”—at your request, and by God’s approval; to allay your fears and preserve your lives. We have Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. xii. 24) to remove our guilt and intercede with God.

**II. The obligations under which the covenant put the people.** Special favours beget special obligations. This covenant is with us, reminds us of our privileged condition and reciprocal duty. 1. God’s commands *must be performed.* “Do them.” Not talk and speculate about them. We must personally accept the terms and bind ourselves to constant performance. 2. God’s commands *must be understood* before they can be performed. “That ye may learn them.” Obedience must be intelligent, “a reasonable service,” not mechanical. Intellect is concerned as well as heart. “With all thy heart; with all thy mind.” 3. God’s commands *must be heard* before they can be understood. “Hear, O Israel.” They must be observed and attentively considered. The ears must be employed for God. “I speak in your ears.” Things heard must not slip or glide out of our treacherous hearts and memories as out of leaking vessels (Heb. ii. 1). Thus there can be no obligation without law to found it upon, and no law in religion but from God. God, therefore, must be heard, feared, and glorified. Loyal obedience is necessary, not to purchase salvation, but to please God and benefit men. “That ye may live, and that it may be well with you.”

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: GOD’S SUPREMACY OVER OUR AFFECTIONS.

#### Verses 6, 7.

The decalogue, or ten words, have been appropriately divided into two parts, called tables of the law. It is a natural division founded on the distinct character of the precepts themselves, and sanctioned by our Saviour in Matt. xxii. 37–40. In one sense the law was a republication of the law of nature. But sin had corrupted the original impress on the human heart, hence it was necessary to make it the basis of the national constitution with Israel, and to preserve it as the rule of life for all mankind. Man is instructed, and God is exalted in this moral law.

**I. God must be the sole object of our affection.** “Thou shalt have none other Gods before me.” Our duties arise from our relations. Our relation to God is the earliest, most essential, and most lasting; regard to Him therefore as our God is our first and highest duty. There are systems of morality which omit, or, slightly notice, the high claims of God upon our hearts, which exalt domestic and social duties, and which sustain and adorn the

relation of friendship and the claims of politics and philanthropy. These systems are from men, but the first commandment from God is "thou shalt have no other gods but *me*." 1. No other god *instead of Jehovah*. Nothing must usurp the place of God in our hearts and affections. Riches, learning, and power are gifts from—and must not be worshipped instead of—God. There is a tendency in man to imagine and make other gods. The Jews were prone to fall into the gross enormities of polytheism; classic nations of antiquity, amid all superstitions and devotions, were "without God." In this age—clear with indications of God's existence and unity, with tender and most constraining motives to cleave to Him—there is still a tendency in our hearts to depart from God and make idols of the creatures; still a necessity to urge the claims of Jehovah, and maintain virtue and piety in the world. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 2. No other god *along with Jehovah*. There cannot be two gods. It is impossible to serve *two* masters. If we hate one we shall cleave to the other, or hold to the one and despise the other (Matt. vi. 24). Yet many try to serve God and the world—make a compromise, and, like Israel, join a false god with the true. "They feared the Lord and served their own gods." 3. Jehovah, and *Jehovah only*, must be our God. He must be the object of our choice and affection. We are forbidden to deny God; to give the glory due to Him to another; and to forget our relation to Him as our God. We must know and acknowledge, worship and serve God as one God, as the only true God, and as our God.

II. The grounds on which God claims to be the sole object of our affection. The law begins with a declaration of God concerning Himself, which serves as a ground and motive for obedience. "I am Jehovah thy God." These words are often repeated, because the tendencies of our nature to forget or slight God's manifestations are deep and dangerous. 1. *God's supreme authority*. "I am Jehovah." Self-existent, infinite, and eternal, the source of life, authority and happiness. Our maker, and has right to dispose of us according to his pleasure. 2. *God's covenant mercy*. "Thy God." The name Jehovah might terrify, but "thy God" is the charter in Christ of all blessings, allures and draws us to him. "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord." 3. *God's wonderful deliverance*. "Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," etc. This was an act of power, wisdom and goodness, specially fitted to incite them to obedience, and kindle their hearts into warmest love. God delivers that he may be served. When he has made and redeemed us surely no other god should hide him from view. "Therefore will we serve the Lord, for he is our God."

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: GOD'S SUPREMACY OVER OUR WORSHIP.

### Verses 8-10.

"The first commandment regards the *object* of worship—the living and true God, and requires that we worship Him and no other. The second respects the *means* of worship, and requires that we worship the true God in such a way only, and by such ordinances as He hath appointed in His word. The first may be discovered by the light of nature, but the second can be discovered only by revelation." (*Patterson*). In one command God declares that He will be worshipped by His intelligent creatures, and in the other He prescribes the method of solemnizing His worship."

I. The spirituality of the Divine nature requires spirituality of Divine worship. God in contrast to all false deities, is a spirit—must be worshipped in spirit and in truth—cannot be, and must not be represented in visible shape.

There is no resemblance to Him in anything He has made. Whatever men plead in favour of sense aiding faith, God says "thou shalt not." 1. We are not *to make* nor fancy any material image of God in heaven above or on earth beneath, or in the waters beneath the earth. 2. We are not *to worship* any picture or painting of God. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them." We long to set the object of our affection before our eyes—feel it difficult to fix our mind upon an unseen God; but we must trust to no image. The Holy Spirit can help our infirmities, and give spirituality of mind and fervour of devotion. Religious worship is an act of thought, principles, and affections—not attitude, genuflections, and outward rites. It must be in spirit and in truth—not in crucifix, bodily form, and graven image. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?"

II. Spirituality of Divine Worship is enforced by special sanctions. To enforce this second (and the first) commandment, certain penalties are threatened and certain mercies promised. 1. *God's righteous displeasure forbids any other worship.* "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." He is zealous for His honour (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11) cannot brook a rival, nor receive a partial or divided homage. 2. *God's wonderful providence will punish any other worship.* One great error of idolatrous systems—and congenial to every sinner—is to suppose that because God is invisible, He does not notice human conduct. But these words show that His government is universal, extending to individual agents and particular actions. The inspection or administration of God is presented in two aspects—(1) *A threatening aspect* to those that hate Him. Sin and its punishment are transmitted. Idolatry and its evil consequences descend from father to son, and God punishes the sins of the parents in the children to the third and fourth generation. This truth appeals to the strongest instincts of our nature, guards the purity of religion, by enlisting the affection of a parent for his offspring and grafting on that affection salutary fear of Divine visitations. (2) *A merciful aspect* to those that love Him. The world is not governed by blind fate. There is no irresistible necessity in the continuous results of evil. A merciful God restrains the sinner, checks the evil, and forgives all who are brought back to Him in penitence, prayer, and love, "The same principle of involving the children with the fathers is followed; but, mark the difference in the extent of its application! The visitation of anger was to reach the third or the fourth generation: the display of mercy was to continue throughout *thousands* of generations!" "Thou showest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them" (Jer. xxxii. 18).

"A Deity believed, will nought avail:

Rewards and punishments make God adored;

And hopes and fears give conscience all her power."—Young.

#### DIVINE VISITATIONS. — *Verses 9, 10.*

It was needful for the sake of the Jews themselves, and for the honour of the true God, that His presence and providence with His people and with other nations should be sensibly realised and enforced by rewards and punishments—that these rewards and punishments should be so distributed as to evince His special interference. We are often more educated by the eye than by the ear. Since we are incapable of lofty abstractions, and insensible to remote consequences of deeds, God seeks by special manifestations to impress our minds and aid us in our duty. Hence the declaration of His government, and the principles on which it is conducted.



I. The government of God is active. He is "*visiting*." He is neither dead nor asleep as heathen gods. Nor has He left the world to the government of chance or abstract law. God may seem to be inactive and uninterested in our concerns, but He is ever watchful. Mr. Lloyd Garrison, addressing a meeting on one occasion on behalf of negro emancipation, was almost despairing, and cast a gloom upon the audience. Up jumped an old negress, and in a voice of thunder shouted, "Mr. Garrison, is God dead? will he not visit His people?" This was like an electric shock, imparting new life and new hopes. From that day the cause assumed a brighter aspect.

II. The government of God is just. "*Visiting the sins*." Men may wink at sin, but God does not. Sentence against evil is not executed speedily; men may be too confident and resolved, their hearts may be *fully set* (the whole energy directed) upon evil (Ecc. viii. 11), but God's patience is not forgetfulness. He is just, and punishment will come. "It comes with feet of wool, but it will strike with hands of lead," says Bp. Reynolds.

III. The government of God is merciful. Shewing *mercy* unto thousands. Merciful and benevolent in its general nature and in its results. Punishment is needful, always just and rightly administered in God's moral government. The *threatening* is merciful, intended to prevent sin. Anger is shown to a few, but mercy to thousands. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands," etc. (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7).

IV. The government of God is universal. It extends to all places—to all individuals. "Them that hate me" and "them that love me;" to all generations, not only to "the third and fourth" but to the end of the world. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Hear, O Israel*. 1. God *speaks* to the people. 2. The people are commanded to *hear* what God utters. 3. To *learn* what they hear. 4. To *keep* when they know the laws. "The difference between Divinity and other sciences, is, that it is not enough to learn, but we must keep and do it; as lessons of music must be practised, and a copy not read only, but acted.—*Trapp*."

Ver. 5. *I stood between*. Moses Mediator. 1. Desired by the people who felt their guilt and distance from God. 2. Provided by God (Ex. xix. 2). 3. Typical of Christ.

Ver. 6. *God set forth*. 1. In essential greatness, "I am the Lord," *i.e.* Jehovah. 2. In covenant mercy. "Thy God." 3. In wonderful providence. Brought from Egypt, the house of bondage. "God's right to give laws

to the Hebrew nation is not founded upon His being the one only God, but upon his having, by miraculous interpositions and works of power, laid the foundations of their state—not upon His character and claims as the Creator of heaven and earth, but upon His peculiar relation to them as their national founder and protector; and hence by the unparalleled services which he had rendered to the Israelites, He had acquired all the title to their willing and grateful obedience that a benefactor could have."—*Jamieson, Dr.*

*The Lord thy God*. 1. *God's sovereignty over us*. He is our Lord—we are His property and subjects. He has absolute right to prescribe, and absolute power to dispose. 2. *God's propriety in us*. "Thy God" in redemption and covenant mercy chiefly, for all have forfeited His favour and love.

Vers. 6, 7. This may well lead the van and be set in the front of all the commandments, because it is the foundation of all true religion. The sum of this commandment is that we should sanctify God in our hearts, and give Him precedence above all created beings. There are two branches—  
 1. That we must have one God. 2. That we must have but one; or thus—  
 1. That we must have God for our God.  
 2. That we must have no other.—  
*Watson.*

Vers. 8–10. *Image worship.* 1. *Impossible.* God cannot be represented. He is spiritual and invisible. 2. *Irrational.* For the workmen is better than the work. Absurd to bow

to the work of men's hands. 3. *Unscriptural.* Against the command of God (Lev. xxvi. 1; Deut. xvi. 22).

Vers. 9, 10. *Family religion.* 1. Parents should consider well before they act; lest they (1) expose themselves, and (2) ruin their children by their wickedness. 2. Children are not excused through bad examples of parents—should imitate their parents in right only, and be thankful if they have been trained up to love and obey God. How careful should we be to set good examples, to maintain the worship of God in the family, and to live that we may rightly influence future generations.

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: GOD'S SUPREMACY OVER OUR LIPS.

#### Verse 11.

God is absolute and cannot be seen in His Divine essence, yet He reveals His glory in His name. Since he cannot be known by similitudes, He manifests Himself in His works and word—in the government of the world and the life and death of His Son. God connects His name, therefore, with the solemnities and transactions of Divine truth. This name must not be abused, but its majesty must impress our minds and guard our lips.

I. *It is our duty to revere the Divine Name.* "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Our tongues must not be claimed as our own (Ps. xii. 3), but devoted to the glory of God. 1. *In religious worship.* In prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, the heart, and not the lips merely, must be engaged. Our vows must not be made in times of sickness and peril, and forgotten in health and deliverance. Our worship must not be hypocritical, superficial, and insincere; nor our service formal and cold. Our profession must not be in words, but in deeds. If we "swear to the Lord of Hosts," we must serve Him "with reverence and godly fear." 2. *In ordinary conversation.* We profane the Holy Name by its use in light, flippant conversation—in jesting and idle talk. In private intercourse, in the market place, and in courts of law, we must give no force to falsehood. All language garnished with oaths and irreverent use of the Divine name is a violation of this commandment—"Hallowed be thy name."

II. *The irreverent use of the Divine name will be punished.* "The Lord will not hold him guiltless." Many excuse themselves from habit and custom; others justify themselves in profaning God's name when they are crossed, disappointed, and carried along by passion. Such are not innocent, but guilty; and though they may escape public rebuke from friends, and punishment from human laws, yet the Lord Himself will execute the law. "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death."

# THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: GOD'S CLAIM UPON OUR TIME.

## Verses 12-15.

"There is a close connection between the commandments of this first table. The *first* commandment is intended to regulate our views and feelings, in relation to the *object* of our supreme homage; the *second* has respect to the *medium* through which that homage is expressed; the *third* regards the *spirit* which is to accompany us in all the solemnities of truth and of religion; and the *fourth*, the appropriation of a portion of our *time* to His service—thus to indicate our subjection to His government, and our willingness to be entirely consecrated to His glory" (*Stowel*). In these words we have an acquaintance with the Sabbath presupposed. It must have been known, and perhaps observed in some respect. Hence the injunction—"remember." The Sabbath was then instituted, and its obligations made known before the giving of the Law at Sinai. Now the command is given to "keep" and "sanctify" it. Notice the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest.

**I. All classes are under obligation to keep the Sabbath.** 1. *Individuals* must observe the day. "*Thou shalt.*" It is binding upon every one as subjects of God's government. Religion—for the permanent interests of which the Sabbath was made—is a matter of personal conviction, experience, responsibility, and practice. 2. *Heads of families* must observe the day. "Nor thy son, nor thy daughter." Parents must habitually regard its sanctity and encourage the performance of its duties in the arrangements and discipline of the family. Thus only can the order and welfare of domestic religion be maintained. 3. *Masters* must observe the day. "Nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant." Rest was to extend to domestics who specially required it, in performing the heavy duties of the household. God also "careth for cattle." Dumb animals as well as human beings were embraced in that mercy which is "over all His works."

**II. The method of keeping the Sabbath.** Two ways are pointed out. 1. It must be kept *as a day of rest*. Work was laid aside for man and beast. All kinds of business in the field and in the market must cease. "Thou shalt not do any work." Physically and morally we require rest. If God saw fit to rest, how much greater need have we to cease from labour. Abolish the Sabbath and human life would be shortened by weary, wasting toil. In 1793 France invented *decades*, and made every tenth day a sabbath, but found out her mistake and returned to the appointed day. We must cease from worldly employments and servile work. "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord." 2. It must be kept *as a day of worship*. As God blessed the day and hallowed it, filling it with peace and good to all; so we must "keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it." Work must be laid aside for worship. The time is set apart for public and private worship. We must neither forget nor carelessly perform the duties required; nor must we profane the day by idleness, unlawful works, or unnecessary recreation. God dignifies human labour, condemns avarice and excessive toil, and teaches us to look upon work not as aimless, incessant, unprofitable, but as pointing to a rest, a fruition which is typical of that eternal Sabbath which "remaineth for the people of God" Heb. iv. 9.

**III. The Inducements to keep the Sabbath.** Many reasons are given for its observance. 1. It is *reasonable* to keep it. God has given us six days for work,



and only claims one for Himself. It might have been the reverse. Is it not, therefore, unreasonable—ungrateful to grudge a seventh part of our time to the worship and service of God! 2. It is *right* to keep it. God has special claims and propriety in this part of our time. God is in covenant relation, condescends to hold communion with us on that day. Hence it is a great privilege to observe, and an awful robbery to desecrate that day. "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." 3. God *commands* us to keep it. "God hath commanded thee." As the law of God, it is authoritative and ultimate—not mere counsel and advice, not a naked rule, a bare prescription of what is right. It *demand*s obedience, and its demands are accompanied with just and awful sanctions. 4. *God's goodness* urges to keep it. Israel were reminded of their servitude in Egypt, of deliverance from it, and of introduction into rest. Therefore their hearts should be warmed to gratitude, and they should be prompted to observe that day which reminds them of the goodness of God (ver. 15). Special displays of Divine mercy, relief from oppression and despair, should lead us on every return of the day of rest to remember our escape and praise our Redeemer.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 11. 1. *What required* in this commandment: a reverent use of God's attributes and titles, ordinances, and words. 2. *What forbidden*: all profaning or abuse of everything by which God makes Himself known to us. 3. *What reason* annexed to enforce observance. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." "The caution that a breach of this commandment incurs guilt in the eyes of Jehovah is especially appropriate, in consequence of the ease with which the temptation to take God's name in vain besets men in their common intercourse with each other" (*Speak. Com.*). Learn—1. The necessity of having becoming views of God. 2. The obligation always to fear Him, and to guard against offending Him by perjury, profanity and blasphemy.

Vers. 12-14. How God esteemeth the strict observance of the Sabbath may appear by the exact delivery of it. For He hath fenced it about like Mount Sinai, with marks and bounds, that profaneness might not approach it. (1) By His watchword, "Remember." (2) By His bounty, "Six days," etc. (3) By His sovereignty, "It is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." (4) By His latitude, "Thou, nor thy son," etc. (5) By His own example, "And He res-

ted the seventh day." (6) By His benediction, "He blessed it," and ordained it to be a means of much blessing to those that observe it (*Trapp*). *The sabbath adapted to the necessities of man.* 1. By affording rest from toil; hence promoting health and enjoyment. 2. By giving opportunity for family intercourse and instruction. 3. By securing due observance of public worship. Hence in His individual, social, and religious condition the Sabbath promotes the welfare of man. Chief Justice Hale observed that according to his care in observing the Lord's day, he commonly prospered in his undertakings the week following—"Blessed is the man. . . . that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it" (Is. lvi. 2).

Ver. 15. *Remember Egypt.* We are prone to remember the palaces and pleasures of Egypt; God admonishes us to remember its *slavery*. The memory of our former state should be—I. An antidote to discontent. Though the labours and trials of the wilderness were many, yet in Egypt we had more. If we labour, it is not to make bricks without straw—not for another, but for our own profit. II. A stimulant to zeal. Remembering Egypt, let us press on toward Canaan; give no advantage to our enemies. III. A reason for obedience. He who graciously delivered

us has right to our service. If we made bricks for Pharaoh, "what shall we render unto the Lord?" If *fear* produced activity, how much more should *love*! IV. Wings for faith and hope. Remember that *that* God who could deliver from Egypt can bring to Canaan.

He who has begun the work will complete it. V. A call to humility. I was but a servant, a *slave*: I owe all to my Deliverer. Without Him I were a slave again. "By grace I am what I am."—(*From Bib. Museum.*)

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: HONOUR TO PARENTS, OR THE RELIGION OF HOME.

Verse 16.

The present division of the commandments may trench upon symmetrical arrangement, but practically that in which the fifth commandment begins, the second table is convenient and important. The four we have considered comprise our duties towards God, the six which remain, our duties towards man in natural order of relationship. If God is to be acknowledged, worshipped in spirit and held in reverence; if the sabbath is to be devoutly kept; it is needful to imbue the mind, and regulate the conduct with remembrance of these truths. This is the highest of parental duties. Children should be taught from earliest days not merely to love, fear and obey, but to *honour* their parents.

**I. Honour is due to parents from children.** "Honour thy father and thy mother." Customs of society distinguish the separate claims of father and mother, but here they are represented as sustaining towards their children one undivided, honourable claim. 1. *Honour is due to Parents on account of relationship to their children.* Next to relation to God is that of parents to children. There is a beautiful resemblance of one to the other. In the care and interest, the tenderness and authority of a father, we have a faint image of the superintendence, compassion, and government of God. Children should honour their parents because they are related to them. (a) As authors of their being. (b) As their support and comfort. (c) As their educators and protectors. 2. *Honour is due to Parents on account of affection for their children.* Parents often love their children as themselves, hence terms of endearment concerning them, "olive branches," "sunbeams," "jewels," and all that is delightful and beautiful. They impoverish themselves to enrich them. They are not like the raven, or ostrich which are cruel to their young. (Job. xxxix. 14). What a debt of gratitude and honour do children owe to parents! Yet how few try to pay it. Philip the son of Charles V., Emperor of Germany, became master of a new world and of the richest and most extensive dominions in Europe by his father's voluntary resignation, but was so ungrateful that he kept his generous parent waiting a long time for the payment of a small pension. Milton was dependent on his family on account of infirmities; yet his two elder daughters seem to have been destitute of affection and pity. Hooker often prayed that he might never give sorrow to his mother, and used to say that he loved her so dearly, that he would try to be good as much for her sake, as for his own.

**II. The inducements which children have to honour their parents.** This is said to be "the first commandment *with promise* (Ep. vi. 2)." The promise may be applied to the Jews, and to all who keep the commandment, and thus we trace the confirmation of the word, in the providence of God? 1. *It is pleasing to God.* (Col. iii. 20). It is joyful to parents themselves, and acceptable to God. "This is *right*," a duty grounded on the simple, natural and unchanging principles of equity. 2. *It has a tendency to lengthen human*

*life.* "That thy days may be prolonged." Long life was considered a blessing (Ps. xci. 16 ; cxxviii. 6), but many children find a grave in the cradle, or die in the flower of their age. "The observers of this commandment have a *promise* of long life and prosperity ; whereas those who neglect the duties of it, have no promise of these things at all. To the former, long life comes in virtue of a promise which is infallible, so far as it shall serve God's glory and their good ; but to the latter it does not come in virtue of any promise at all, for such have no interest in the promise ; on the contrary they are under the curse of God ; for it is written, 'cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them'" (*Paterson*). 3. *It guarantees the well being of life.* "That it may go well with thee." Long life without the blessings and comforts of life is not desirable. Life is only a blessing, when we retain health and reason, and grow in grace and usefulness, as we grow in age. "Observe and hear all these words that it may go well with thee and thy children after thee for ever." 4. *It pledges national existence.* Life and its enjoyments, possession of Canaan, and national permanence depended upon filial respect. Jewish, Roman and other histories, bear witness to this truth. The words set forth a universal principle of national life and existence. "Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts . . . therefore saith the Lord of Hosts, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." (Jer. xxxv. 18, 19).

#### THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: OR THE RELIGION OF TEMPER.—*Verse 17.*

The next three commandments determine our duties towards our neighbour, and secure life, marriage and property. In Lev. xix. 18 they are summed up in one word, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Not only is murder condemned, but all our passions from which murder originates. Hence we may term this command the religion of temper.

**I. What this commandment forbids.** Mere killing is not prohibited, for that was lawful sometimes, but every act of violence which inflicts personal injury and endangers human life. "The omission of the object, still remains to be noticed, as showing that the prohibition includes not only the killing of a fellow-man, but the destruction of one's own life or suicide." (*Keil*). 1. *Violent deeds are forbidden.* *Suicide*, or taking away our own life. Ancient systems, taught as a lofty sentiment of morality, that a man might withdraw from life when he found it expedient. Modern verdicts and modern customs of assigning insanity as the cause of this crime lead us to regard it with pity and not detestation. We must look at the act in its real nature, in the law which prohibits it, and the dreadful consequences by which it is enforced. "Do thyself no harm." *Duelling* is a vestige of feudal barbarism. It constitutes the person who thinks himself injured the judge, witness, and avenger of his own wrongs. The grounds of its defence, are irrational, and subversive of all law, justice, and humanity. The duellist makes a law for himself, exalts it above the institutions of his country, and the laws of God. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty : And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." *Murder* is forbidden. Every man is our brother. We are bound to love him, and promote his welfare. To murder is to hate him, to inflict the greatest misery on him for ever. In the gospel a sacred dignity is attached to man. He is made in "the image of God," and associated with the nature of God. Hence, infinite majesty is insulted, infinite goodness abused, and divine authority trampled on. "For in the image of God, made he man." (Gen. ix. 6). 2. *Violent passions are forbidden.* As explained and fulfilled by



Jesus Christ, this commandment embraces a class of most powerful human affections and desires. It is enforced by all the facts and principles of the gospel. *Anger* is a species of murder, and when roused to excess, will produce outrages most shameful. "In their anger they slew a man." Causeless anger, scornful contempt, and passionate reviling are three breaches of this command. (Matt. v. 21, 22). *Hatred* often leads to excess in language and actions. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (John, iii. 15). A *scornful spirit* must not be indulged. To scorn is to despise, vilify and revile. *Revenge* must not be cherished. He who is proud of his own importance, careless of the rights of justice, and sacrifices the peace, character and life of the offender to the indulgence of passion breaks this law. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not *avenge*, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." (Lev. xix. 17, 18).

"What will not ambition and revenge descend to."—Milton.

**II. What this commandment enjoins.** It teaches the very opposite feelings of envy, hatred, and revenge. 1. *It enjoins feelings of humanity.* We must not envy nor grieve at the prosperity of another—not quarrel, nor rail, nor plot against another. We must exercise mercy, not cruelty. We must be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving towards our fellow creatures, and put away "all bitterness and wrath." 2. *It enjoins the use of all lawful efforts to preserve life.* Whatever tends to destroy our natural life is expressly forbidden. We must avoid all intemperance, gluttony, and drunkenness. We must not be indifferent to our own wants, nor neglect the wants of others. Every effort must be made to feed, clothe, and preserve the body, to avoid immoderate labour and indulgence, and to keep the life of another. Destroy not your own souls by false confidence, pernicious sentiments, and neglect of "the great salvation." Destroy not the souls of others by neglect in preventing them from sin, in abandoning the religious interests of family, society, and neighbourhood, and by withholding your effort and influence to save men. Oh, avoid the guilt of spiritual murder!

*Murder forbidden.* Observe, this commandment is—I. Universal in application; to each person is said, "Thou shalt not kill." There is no exception to this rule. II. Emphatic in its wording; "shalt not." Note the brevity of the whole commandment by which additional force is given to it. Brevity is not only the source of wit, but of wisdom also. III. Concerning the greatest of crimes. The awful nature of murder is sufficiently shown by—1. The abhorrence in which it is held, both by God and man. 2. The terrible reproaches of conscience with which the murderer is tormented.—J. S. Clarke.

"O horror! horror! horror! Tongue, nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee."—Shakespeare.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 16. Reverence due to parents.** Honour your parents, *i.e.*, 1. Obey them; 2. Respect them; 3. Treat their opinions with regard; 4. Treat their habits with respect. They may be different from ours; may be antiquated, and to us strange, odd, whimsical; but they are the habits of a *parent*, and are not to be ridiculed. 5. provide for them when sick, weary, old, and infirm.—Barnes.

*Prolonged.* A good child lengtheneth his father's days; therefore God promiseteth to lengthen his. Ill children, as they bring their parents' "gray hairs with sorrow to the grave," so they are many times cut off in the midst of their days, as Abimelech was: God rendering upon him the evil that he did to his father (Judges ix 56). Besides the punishment they have in their posterity, to whom they have been

*peremptores potius quàm parentes.—*  
*Trapp.*

*We have a command—*“Honour thy father and thy mother.” The political fathers or magistrates (Job. xxix. 16); seniors, venerable with age (Lev. xix. 32); spiritual fathers (1 Cor. iv. 15); domestic fathers, fathers of households (2 Kings v. 13); natural fathers, fathers of the flesh (Heb. xii. 9). *How children are to obey this command.* 1. By a reverential esteem of their persons. (a) *Inwardly*, by fear mixed with love (Lev. xix. 3). (b) *Outwardly*, in word and gesture. 2. By careful obedience. (a) In hearkening to their council (Prov. i. 8). (b) In complying with their commands (Jer. xxxv. 6; Col. iii. 20). 3. By relieving their wants (Gen. xlvii. 12). *The reasons why children should honour their parents.*

1. It is the solemn command of God. 2. It is well pleasing to the Lord (Col. iii. 20). 3. Parents deserve honour on account of their great love and affection for their children.—*Watson.*

Ver. 17. 1. The value of human life. Philosophy, science, and superstition dignify not human nature. Only where the Gospel is known is life appreciated, preserved, and consecrated to right ends. 2. The guilt of taking away human life. It may be taken away by violence, excess, or neglect. If a beast killed a man, it was stoned; what punishment, then, shall fall upon the murderer when God comes to “make inquisition for blood” (Ps. ix. 12).

#### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE.—*Verse 18.*

“Nature,” says Grindon, “is a system of nuptials.” Human love is the highest form of love. When true lovers meet, God hath joined them together. Marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church; intended to be an honourable and abiding institution, and must not be violated by unfaithfulness and adultery. “Let not man put asunder.”

I. The sanctity of marriage must be duly regarded. *Adultery* was prevalent in Eastern countries, where heat and idleness seem to nourish sinful lusts almost beyond control. It is the most awful perversion of God’s institution, and the strongest language ever used in Scripture depicts its accursed nature. In the light of the New Testament we read this law in broader spirit than mere letter indicates, and that domestic bonds may be destroyed and the household invaded in different ways. “The desertion of a husband or of a wife; the neglect of conjugal duties, so minutely specified and so persuasively urged in various parts of the New Testament; divorce for any reason but the ascertained perpetration of the crime denounced in this prohibition; the degradation of the marriage contract, by subordinating it to schemes of avarice, ambition, or sensuality—each of these is a gross violation of the seventh commandment,” says Stowel. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

II. To secure due regard for marriage sanctity, personal chastity must be cultivated. This sin and the whole class of passions and gratifications of which it is a part, are offences against purity—the purity of God, of ourselves, and of those affected by our example. Cultivate—1. *Chastity in thought.* Thoughts are dangerous and only require opportunity to break forth into open wickedness. “Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. v. 28). 2. *Chastity in conversation.* Words as well as acts may violate the spirit of this commandment (Matt. xii. 37). Let no corrupt, worthless through putridity, communication proceed out of your

mouth" (Eph. iv. 29). 3. *Chastity in actions.* Fornication, polygamy, and all unnatural pollutions—immodest behaviour and unchaste looks and dress must be abandoned. "Fornication and uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. v. 3).

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY.—*Verse 19.*

Man is endowed with a principle which impels him to the acquisition of wealth. The proper exercise of this principle leads to gradations of social rank, and lays the foundation for the institutions and laws by which property is preserved and transmitted. But since man is sinful and selfish, it is necessary to embody this law in the legislation of the community.

I. How this commandment may be violated. The highwayman who steals his neighbour's purse; the domestic who takes his master's cash, and the apprentice who steals his drugs; the tradesman who makes "the ephah small" (Amos viii. 5), and weighs with "the balances of deceit" (Hos. xii. 7), who seeks to overreach or defraud; the dishonest partner; the fraudulent bankrupt; the traducer of character; the borrower and receiver of stolen goods—all violate this law. Spiritually, a man robs God by taking away the Sabbath, withholding what is due from him to support and propagate the gospel, by neglecting his own soul, and foolishly wasting life, with its calls and opportunities. "Will a man rob God?"

II. How to guard against the violation of this commandment. To obey the law and preserve the healthy exercise of a principle which becomes sinful by excessive indulgence we should 1. *Be diligent in a lawful calling.* In the avocations of life we have the happiness of individuals combined with the interests of society—a sphere in which our powers have no need to be lavished on trifles nor perverted by sinful pursuits. Employment for our own support and that of our family is needful. We are urged not to be idle, careless, and slothful—not to engage in gambling, nor to cherish a covetous, grasping disposition, but to be "diligent in business" and "abide in our calling." "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may give to him that needeth" (Eph. iv. 28). 2. *Be content with your lot in life.* It is the arrangement of God and not the work of chance. With all our shifting and tricks, our avarice and plots, we cannot alter things. "Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all: and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." Our individual histories and efforts subserve to the plans of God as much as the fall of states and the motion of stars. Rich and poor are exhorted to trust in God and acquiesce in His providence. "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. xiii. 5). 3. *Moderate your views, expectations, and desires.* A sober estimate of our wants and means of gratification is required. Vigorous restraint must be put upon the tendency to over estimate our own claims, and the indulgence of romantic hopes which are often fascinating and ruinous. Fret not nor vex yourselves for the wealth and property of another. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."



THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.—Verse 20.

We have been considering the law of the family, the law of social right, the law of social purity, and the law of honesty; now we notice the law of truth. We are to regard our neighbour's reputation, and not injure his character. Our great poet says—

“Who steals my purse steals trash;  
But he who filches from me my good name,  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
Yet leaves me poor indeed!”

**I. What is forbidden in this commandment.** False witness may be given in various ways; but in everything we must put away lying and speak truth with our neighbour (Eph. iv. 25). 1. *In courts of law* false witness was especially condemned. The *prosecutor* is forbidden to make unjust demand, to lay false charges, and to suborn false witnesses; the *defender* to deny a just charge, and to make artful evasions; the *witnesses* must not deny or keep back any part of truth; the *advocate* must not defend what is wrong, nor the *judge* pervert justice and condemn the innocent. We must freely, sincerely speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. “A faithful witness will not lie; but a false witness will utter lies” (Prov. xiv. 5). (Cf. Deut. xix. 18, 19; Jer. iv. 2; Zech. viii. 17). 2. *In daily life* false witness is forbidden. Backbiting, evil construing, and malicious accusation must not be indulged. Nor must we be guilty of idle gossip, tale-bearing, and raising, receiving, and spreading scandal or false report. “To credit common report is in itself a species of calumny,” says one. “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth an ear to a naughty tongue” (Prov. xvii. 4). Give no currency to scandal, nor join those mischievously employed, crying out “Report, and we will report” (Jer. xx. 10). “How many thousand souls are hurt every day by the words of others,” says Baxter. “Thou shalt not *raise* (credit, take up, bear) a *false* (empty, untruthful) report; put not thine hand with the wicked (render him no help) to be an unrighteous witness” (Ex. xxiii. 1). (Cf. Lev. xix. 16; Ex. xxiii. 7; Ps. ci. 5; Prov. xix. 9.)

“Whoever keeps an open ear  
For tattlers, will be sure to hear  
The trumpet of contention;  
Aspersions is the babblers’ trade;  
To listen is to lend him aid,  
And rush into dissension.—*Cowper.*”

**II. What is enjoined in this commandment.** It enjoins truth and simplicity in our intercourse one with another, an agreement between the heart and the lips. 1. *Truthfulness in speech.* Lying is offensive to God and unfits for society. How can you converse or bargain with a man when you cannot trust his word? “Therefore put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.” (Eph. iv. 25). 2. *Regard for our neighbour’s good name.* Invest him with the character of a friend, charitably cover his infirmities, betray not his secrets, readily acknowledge his gifts, and receive good report concerning him. Defend his reputation when unjustly attacked, envy not his success nor take pleasure in his disgrace. “Speak evil of no man.” (Titus iii. 2). 3. *Love to others as to ourselves.* We should be pleased with the good of another, as well as with our own good. Never keep an account of the misdeeds of another, with a view to sum up and charge against him when occasion serves. Abound in that charity which “doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, *thinketh*, (imputeth) no evil.” (1 Cor. xiii. 5). Our neighbour lives near us, comes under

our notice, and lies more or less at our mercy. His claims are therefore enhanced by *nearness*, by intimate acquaintance with him, and by all local and relative obligations that bind us together. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—

"Who that dares  
His brother's name, his brother's cause malign,  
The very law maligns, spurns its restraints,  
And umpire sits, where he himself should bow."

### THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: UNLAWFUL DESIRE.—*Verse 21.*

"As the sixth, seventh, and eighth Commandments forbid us to injure our neighbour in deed, the ninth forbids us to injure him in word, and the tenth in thought. No human eye can see the coveting heart; it is witnessed only by him who possesses it, and by Him to whom all things are naked and open. But it is the root of all sins against our neighbour in word or in deed. (Jas. i. 14, 15). The man who is acceptable before God, walking uprightly, not backbiting with his tongue, nor doing evil to his neighbour, is he who "speaketh the truth in *his heart*." (Ps. xv. 2, 3).—*Sp. Com.*

**I. The way in which this commandment is violated.** By that discontentedness with our lot in life which leads us to fret, repine and rebel against God's providence. "Neither murmur ye as some of them murmured." (1 Cor. x. 10). By envying or grieving at our neighbour's good. "Grudge not one against another (Jas. v. 9). By indulging unlawful desires for things which belong to our neighbour. Excessive longing after another's wealth and possessions is branded by this Commandment as sin. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness."

**II. The spirit which leads to the violation of this commandment.** "Thou shalt not covet." The words indicate the intense spirituality and holiness of the law. St. James (i. 15) looks upon sin as an outward act. St. Paul looks upon it in its source and earliest stages. The province of human law is the deed, that of divine law the heart, the thoughts from which spring the actions. The thought and desire may lead to execution of evil. Evil concupiscence is the root of all sin, especially of offences which men commit against their fellowmen (Matt. xv. 19; Mark vii. 21). Eve and Achan "saw, coveted, and took." Covetousness instigated Judas to betray the Saviour, and induced Ananias and Sapphira to "tempt the Holy Ghost." "I had not known sin (clearly and fully as an indwelling and virulent principle), but by the law; for I had not known lust (irregular and ungoverned desire), except the (Mosaic) law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. vii. 7).

**III. The method of correcting this spirit.** Hippocrates advised a consultation of all the physicians in the world for the cure of covetousness. What they could not discover the Bible prescribes. 1. *Form a right estimate of worldly good.* We covet what never satisfies. "Solomon had put all the creatures in a retort," says quaint Watson, "and distilled out their essence, and behold 'all was vanity'" (Ecc. ii. 11). 2. *Be satisfied with present possessions.* Why ungrateful because we have not more and others less. 'The more we have the greater will be our account at the last day. Let us believe that condition best which God has given to us. Contentment, says Socrates, is "the wealth of nature." "I have enough," cried Jacob (Gen. xxxiii. 11). "I have learned, in whatsoever

state I am, therewith to be *content* (i.e., sufficient in one's self, self-contained, opposed to outward blessings). (Phil. iv. 11-13.) 3. *Pray for Divine grace to help.* This alone can subdue lust. Cherish faith in God who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. Faith is the remedy for care and covetousness. It overcomes the world, purifies the heart, and makes God our portion (Ps. xvi. 5). Ask the Holy Spirit to make you heavenly minded, and fix your thoughts on Christ and things above. "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

The closing commandment is of great importance in two distinct points of view, *first*, as exhibiting the spirit of all the previous commandments, and *secondly*, as laying the foundation for just and consistent views of all the doctrines of the Gospel. It exhibits *the spirit of the divine law*, as extending to the *desires* of the heart; the subtlest movings of the mind, as well as the visible actions of the life. In other commandments, a man may lose sight of the real character of the government under which he is placed, and may imagine that if he secures the confidence of his fellow creatures he is safe. This is the prevailing state of mind of men of every rank. It is thought if we infringe not on the rights of others—seize not their property—nor malignantly traduce their characters—nor wantonly endanger their lives, we are moral. But this commandment brings us under the eye of an omniscient ruler, under the authority of a spiritual government. It teaches us that our thoughts and wishes are minutely inspected. It pursues us to our secrecy—pierces the veil of external appearances, and lays open the foldings of self-delusion. It scrutinizes our very souls, and makes us feel the omnipresence of Deity. It brings the sanctions of *His* law to bear directly on our present consciousness; links the moments of our existence to the last judgment, and pours into the inmost chambers of the spirit the light of a future world. "I had not known sin, except the law had said, 'thou shalt not covet.'" *Secondly.* The importance of this commandment will be felt when we consider it as laying the *foundation for just and consistent views of the doctrines of the gospel.* The sublime truths of the one are from the same God who "spake the words" of the other. It is only by invalidating the authority, or by subduing the lofty tone, of the commandments, that a man can either resist the evidence or pervert the meaning of the gospel. How can a man for instance, consistently deny the total depravity of the human race, without first destroying the uncompromising strictness of the divine law, thundering forth its curses on even an irregular desire? How can a man persuade himself that it is not his *duty* to believe on the name of Jesus Christ for salvation, without first persuading himself that it is not his duty to love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself, in a word, that nothing is *due* from him to God, and consequently that he is not a subject of moral government of God? The great promise of the gospel to our first parents, was delivered in circumstances illustrative of this sentiment; for the views they had of the sentence passed upon them, made them feel the necessity and value of this promise. How often in the public discourses of Jesus, and in more private dialogues, with various classes surrounding him, do we see his anxiety to produce an *impression* of the sanctity and strictness of the commandments,—evidently for the purpose of silencing the objector and preparing him to "receive the Kingdom of God?" In the same spirit the apostles preached and wrote. A consciousness of guilt will lead you to rely on the perfect obedience of Christ. Here we have not simply, an exhibition of mercy, but of "mercy and truth" meeting together—not merely the triumph of grace, but of "grace reigning *through righteousness*, into eternal life." "God hath set him forth, not only as a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins;" but also, "to declare his righteousness, that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."—*From Dr. Stowel.*



HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 18. The sum of this commandment is the *preservation of bodily purity*. 1. Something tacitly implied; which is that the ordinance of marriage should be observed. (1 Cor. vii. 2; Heb. xiii. 4). 2. Something expressly forbidden; which is infecting ourselves with bodily pollutions.—*Watson*.

Ver. 19. *Dishonesty forbidden*. Observe the simple comprehensiveness of this commandment. 1. Nothing is said about *the value* of the thing stolen. The law is broken whether the thing taken, be a kingdom or a pin. 2. Nothing is said about the *nature* of the thing stolen; it may be property, time, reputation, etc. 3. Nothing is said about *the method* of stealing; whether it be secretly appropriated, or violently wrested from its owner.—*Biblical Museum*.

Ver. 20. In this commandment, three kinds of interests are combined—the interests of truth—of character—and of neighbourhood.—*Stowel*.

Learn—1. The value of a good name. 2. The sacredness of truth.

3. The necessity of guarding our tongue. 4. The danger of false witness. (Deut. xix. 18, 19; Prov. xix. 5).

"Give thoughts no tongue."—*Shakespeare*.

Ver. 21. The injunction is repeated to call attention and impress the mind. The form here differs from that in (Ex. xx. 17). The order of the words *house* and *wife* is reversed, two different words *desire* and *covet* are used here, and the word *field* is added. The first two variations are explained by the general character of the passage, and it seems natural to mention the "field," when Moses was speaking with the partition of Canaan in view. Learn—1. The *nature* of covetousness. It denotes a state of mind from which the Supreme good has been lost, labouring to replace Him by some subordinate form of enjoyment. 2. The *origin* of covetousness from within. Desires, lusts etc. 3. The *forms* of covetousness. Worldliness, rapacity, avarice, prodigality, etc. 4. The guilt and evils of covetousness. 5. The doom of the covetous. "The covetousness whom the Lord abhorreth."

THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S LAW.—*Verses 22-25*.

The delivery of the commandments was accompanied with every display of grandeur, and amid circumstances of terror. Everything was ordered to impress the mind with the glory of God, the rigour of law, and the dread of penalty. This imposing manner and appalling phenomena indicate the majesty of God's law. This majesty is seen in different ways.

I. In the divinity of its origin. "These words the Lord spake." The voice of God was distinctly heard articulating, and that voice was louder than the loudest peals of thunder. Many ask, "from whence do we get the moral law?" The answer is given here. It came from God—the grandest and highest origin to which anything can aspire! It is elevated above the code of Egypt, Persia and Greece—a standard of life infinitely beyond the invention of man, and to which the holiest have never reached. A distinguished lawyer rather sceptically inclined on this subject undertook to read the Old Testament to satisfy himself concerning the validity of its claims. When he read the Decalogue, lost in admiration he exclaimed, "where did Moses get that law?" Further study removed every sceptical doubt, and produced conviction of its divine origin (*cf.* Pulpit Com. p. 106). "We know that God spake unto Moses."

**II. In the terrible phenomena which accompanied its delivery.** Such phenomena were varied, most terrific and designed to produce the conviction of the authority and holiness of law. 1. *There was natural agency.* The deepest impressions are made upon the mind through the senses, God who knew what was in man signalized his descent on Sinai, with thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words." What must be the aim and dignity of a law thus given? What should be the regard and obedience we pay to the great Lawgiver Himself? "That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, *the Lord thy God.*" 2. *There was supernatural agency.* The word was spoken "by angels." (Heb. ii. 2). The law was received "by the disposition (ministration) of angels" (Acts vii. 53); "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." (Gal. iii. 19). The presence of angels is often referred to in the giving of the law, to indicate its solemnity and claims. "He shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints, (myriads of holy ones, *i.e.* angels); from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Deut. xxxiii. 2 (*cf.* Psa. lxxxviii. 17; Heb. iii. 3).

**III. In the design for which it was given.** There was mercy mixed with majesty and the appalling phenomena produced the desired effect. 1. *To test their obedience.* Israel had been surrounded by idolatry, and the ideas of God's majesty and reverence for law had been lost, by deifying objects of sense. The manifestations of Sinai were directly adapted to inspire the soul with reverence for the infinite majesty and eternal power of that Being with whom they had to do—to put their obedience to a fresh proof and give them a more signal opportunity of showing devotedness to His will. "For God is come to prove you." 2. *To keep them from sin.* They learned the guilt of offending a God so terrible in strictness and holiness. They felt that they were weak, frail, and sinful creatures, and were struck with consternation at such awful displays. Moses himself was overpowered with fear (Heb. xii. 21). This was a dispensation of terror, designed to prepare for the gospel. "Therefore knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men." 3. *To show the need of a mediator.* Conscious of guilt, they were greatly alarmed. "This great fire will consume us." They wondered that they remained alive after witnessing such appearances. "For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" They expected to hear more, but could not forbear it, and requested Moses to hear and speak for them, "Go thou near," etc. (ver. 27). Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant.

**IV. In the method in which it is handed down to us.** We may judge of the value and importance of communications by the forms in which they are written. 1. *This law is complete,* "and he added no more" (ver. 22). The great voice spoke no more directly to the people. The scene was not repeated, and the law was complete in itself and distinct from other revelations given through Moses. "The law of the Lord is perfect." 2. *This law is permanent.* "He wrote them in two tables of stone," to preserve them from corruption, and transmit them pure and entire to posterity. Let us thank God for a *written* revelation, which is a natural and human method of conveyance, more complete, uniform, and permanent than any other form. *Vox audita perit, littera scripta manet,* "a word heard perishes, but a written letter remains." Tradition passes away like the morning clouds; the Bible will continue as long as sun and moon endure. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

**THE USE OF NATURE IN DIVINE INSTRUCTION.—Verses 23–26.**

Nature and the Bible have the same author, and both are written for the instruction of man. "Thus there are two books from whence I collect my divinity," says Sir Thomas Brown, "besides that written one by God, another of His servant, Nature—that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all; those that never saw Him in the one have discovered Him in the other." God, in the revelation of His will, has often created the scenes and used the elements of nature. This is specially seen in the giving of the Law on Sinai. Hence learn the use of natural phenomena in Divine instruction.

**I. Man is constituted to learn from nature.** His senses are adapted to the external world. "Ye have *heard* His voice—we have *seen* this day." For every organ of sense there seems to be an object in nature. But man's moral nature is affected through the medium of sense. Many talk of "the sensuous minds of the Jewish people," but we are children in this respect. We are frightened at the lightning and the thunder—terror-stricken at floods, fires, and earthquakes. We are roused to a sense of our danger and our guilt by the manifestation of God in His works; and, like Massillon's audiences in the French Court, dread His terrible judgments. "Let not God speak with us lest we die."

**II. Nature is constituted to teach man.** Nature is God's mind expressed in matter: "a product of His power and wisdom—a mirror in which His attributes are reflected—a volume in which, by legible characters or expressive signs, He maketh Himself known" (*Dr. Jas. Buchanan*). "Natural theology" is only the true insight and real exposition of God's revelation in Nature; for "in His temple doth everyone speak of (marg., every whit of it uttereth) His glory" (Ps. xxix. 9). But Nature, as well as the Bible, allows special Divine interpositions. Matter is not eternal, nor is abstract law endowed with attributes of deity. We have often direct interpositions which seem—but only seem, perhaps—above natural law. God speaks to us by the elements, forces, and scenes of Nature. He often extorts confession, vows, and prayers by its awful displays, and speaks in tones which lead us to cry for mercy and a mediator. "Let not God speak with us," but "do thou speak with us, and we will hear it and do it."

**MOSES CHOSEN MEDIATOR.—Verses 27, 28; 30, 31.**

As all the people stood before the mount, terrified by the vivid flames and the trembling earth, they feared death. The voice of God overpowered them more than anything else, and the heads of the people and elders requested Moses to intercede.

**I. The reason of this mediation.** In this awful display Israel realised their moral condition as unfit for communion with Jehovah. Guilty man has always felt his distance from God, and at every indication of the supernatural cried out with fear. Convinced of sin we feel the necessity of a mediator.

**II. The nature of this mediation.** When the people "stood afar off," conscious of guilt and afraid of God's wrath, "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness," or was made to draw near (Ex. xx. 21), for he durst not venture himself. The Rabbis think that God sent an angel to take him by the hand and lead him up.

1. *He spoke to God for the people.* 2. *He spoke to the people for God.* "Speak



thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee." Moses typified Christ by whom we draw nigh to God without fear and reluctance. By him "we have boldness, courageous outspokenness (Acts iv. 13), and access with confidence." Eph. iii. 12.

III. The Divine approval of this mediation. Perhaps they did not know the full import of what they did, but the nomination was well pleasing to God. "They have well said all that they have spoken." Moses is duly appointed, and God speaks to them through his mouth, and they promise to hear and obey. Thus was the covenant made between God and Israel. Moses was honoured as the giver of the law, but Jesus is more highly exalted. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house."

#### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORDS AND DEEDS.—*Verse 23.*

He expressly mentions having *heard* what they had *said* to Moses. God always hears what we say, not as an unconcerned auditor, but as witness and judge. Solemn thought! The words here were words of religious avowal. "*We will hear and do it.*" God has heard our religious resolutions and engagements. *First* our private ones—that we would watch against such a temper; pray for grace to resist such a temptation; to redeem the time and honour the Lord with our substance. *Secondly*, our more public and solemn ones; when we joined ourselves to His people; went to His table; and over the memorials of His dying love said, "Henceforth by thee only will I make mention of Thy name." *I have heard*, says He, the voice of the words, etc.; and adds with approbation, containing in it complaint, "They have well *said* all they have *spoken*. But talking and doing are two things. Even amongst ourselves, one goes a little way without the other. Actions speak louder than words. What is lip service in religion! Judas gave our Lord the lip—kissed and betrayed Him. Ezekiel's hearers extolled his preaching; brought others to admire him; but their hearts went after their covetousness. Here they spoke well in expressing their readiness to hear and do. But God, who knew them better than they knew themselves, exclaimed, "O that there was such a heart in them."

Speech is one of the most uncertain criterions to judge of character, as to reality or degree of religion. From education, reading, and hearing, persons may learn to talk well—may surpass others far better than themselves: as an empty vessel sounds louder than a full one, and a shallow brook is more noisy than a deep river. Some speak little, concerning themselves especially, for fear of deception, or lest they should appear to be what they are not. Baxter says, in his life of Judge Hale, I feared he was wanting in experimental religion, as he seldom spoke of his own spiritual views and feelings. But upon better acquaintance I found out my mistake. He had heard from many so much hypocrisy and fanaticism that he was urged towards the extreme of silence. It would be better for some to talk less of high confidence and wonderful ecstasies before those weak in faith and comfort, and in danger of being depressed by comparison. To how many individuals will these words apply! The *champion of truth*, has defended its purity and importance—contended earnestly and as far as argument and evidence goes, wisely for the faith. He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*. But where is the spirit of truth? the meekness of wisdom? the mind of Christ? *Another* in the sanctuary has acknowledged in language equally beautiful and true, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, etc. He has well *said* all that he has

*spoken.* But where is the broken heart, the contrite spirit? How often after these confessions is the sermon founded upon them disliked and the preacher condemned! A *third* has gone to his brethren in distress and justified the ways of God to man, but does he justify God's dealings with himself in trouble? He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*; but reminds us of Job's language, "Behold thou hast instructed many and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee and thou art troubled." Men mistake themselves though often sincere as they are earnest. They do not distinguish between impulse and disposition, outward excitement and inward principle. Hazael, at the prediction of his cruelties, ignorant of the change that power would produce in him, really execrated the character he became. Peter presuming, but not false, said though all should be offended, yet will not I. The disciples supposed themselves established in faith, beyond the danger of temptation to forsake Him, when they said "Now we believe." But Jesus answered them, "O that there was such a heart in you!"  
—*From Jay.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23-26. *A Triple Prodigy.*

1. They heard the voice of God speaking with them in distinct language.
2. They saw the fire, the symbol of His presence, the appearance of which demonstrated it to be supernatural.
3. Though God appeared so terrible, yet no person was destroyed, for He came not "to destroy, but to save."—*Wilson.*

*Why should they fear to die?* Since they had seen that day that God doth talk with man, and He liveth? It is answered that they looked upon their present safety as a wonder, but feared what would follow upon such an interview, if continued. It is still the work of the law to serve man, and to drive them to seek for a mediator. If God speaks to us from heaven His stillest rhetoric would be too loud for us.—*Trapp.*

*Terror of law.* 1. Its design. 2. Its results. 3. Its inefficiency to save.

"The law was delivered in this terrible manner, partly to procure reverence for the doctrine of it, and partly to set forth the nature and office of it; which is to terrify and thunder-strike offenders. This fire wherein the law was given is still in it, and will never be out of it." (Deut. xxxiii. 2).—*Trapp.*

Vers. 25-27. 1. The condition of the people, in the state of their mind, and in the locality of their camp, "afar off" in both senses. 2. The necessity of intercourse between God and the people. 3. The medium of intercourse. "A mediator, Moses was not of redemption as Christ that "mediator of the new covenant," and "surety of a better testament (Heb. vii. 22; ix. 15), but of receiving the law, and delivering it to the people, for which end he went up."—*Trapp.*

### TRUE RELIGION DESCRIBED.—*Verse 29.*

These words express God's wish for His people, and describe the obedience which He requires from them. The law had produced a penitent feeling, and Israel had made good resolutions under the influence of that feeling. But true religion does not consist in good feelings and good resolves. God wishes for a true heart and constant obedience. "A heart in them to fear Me always." True religion is described—

**I. In its nature.** The fear of God. 1. *Not emotion.* Many are capable of impression and feel deeply sensible of their wants. But frames and feelings change; emotions die away and leave the heart cold and indifferent. Men may be sensitive in their nature, penetrated with the beauty, power and interests of religion, but at the call of duty—the demand for resolute obedience, “they are offended.” 2. *Not resolution.* Israel resolved, and God commended their resolutions, but where was their constancy, their sincerity and heart? Men promise what they forget to perform, and their hearts do not chime in with their lips. 3. But *the fear of God.* Not the spirit of a slave, but of a son. The love which drives out fear and brings us near to God. We must know God not as our Creator and governor, but as our Father. The sense of His presence, authority and love must penetrate the mind, elevate the soul, and temper sacred awe, with filial confidence.

**II. In its centre.** “A heart in them.” The tone, colouring, and direction of the outer life depend upon the condition of the heart—the inner feelings. Our hearts must be renewed and made susceptible of sympathy and love. “A new heart,” “a heart of flesh,” “a clean heart” must be given and fixed on God. “*Such a heart.*” Words and profession, mere knowledge and religious excitement are superficial. The seat of life and conduct is within a man. “For as he thinketh in his heart so is he.”

**III. In its manifestation.** Keeping the commandments. If religion exists it will be seen in its fruits. As light shines forth in beauty, so love in the heart will manifest itself, not in impulse but obedience. “If ye love Me *keep My commandments.*” This keeping must be—1. *Universal.* “*All my commandments.*” We are not to select some, like the Pharisees, rigidly to observe as compensation for the breach of others. All must be kept. This only is acceptable to God. 2. *Constant.* “*Keep all my commandments always.*” In words, actions, and heart. Pledges are made under terror, but God requires expression of steadfast principle, and seeks “patient continuance in well-doing.”

**IV. In its rewards.** There is no merit in our obedience. It is defective and unworthy. In fact we never can perfectly obey even one commandment in ten. But where true conduct springs from a right heart, there will be happiness or well-being. Thus the way of holiness is the way to happiness and God’s favour. 1. *Personal happiness.* “That it might be *well with them.*” 2. *Happiness upon posterity.* “*And with their children.*” 3. *Happiness perpetual.* “*For ever!*” “A perpetuity of bliss alone is bliss.” All this from a right heart! Have we got such a heart in us? We are taught how it may be gained. “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. xxxii. 40).

### DIVINE SOLICITUDE.

How lovely does God appear in the concern He here expresses! It is the *language of complaint.* As much as to say, “But I do not find it so.” Is He then disappointed? Not as to fact—for He knows all things—but as to right. Surely, He may expect from us attention to His voice and improvement of advantages with which we are favoured. When He meets with nothing of this, He has reason to complain. This is the meaning when He says, “What more could have been done for My vineyard, and I have not done it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? These three years I came seeking fruit, and finding none.” It is the *expression of desire.* When Scripture ascribes human attributes and feelings to God, they must be understood according to the perfection of His nature. They do not



precisely mean the same in Him as in us. Yet there is always a *truth*, which is the basis of such metaphorical representations. Slavish adherence to systematic divinity has injured some of the finest passages of Revelation; and which were intended to be felt rather than criticised. Do not object, therefore, that "God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever he pleaseth;" and ask "who hath resisted His will?" for this is His own language, "O that there was such a heart in them!" "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Yes, these are expressions of a God that cannot lie. This affords me encouragement. Unworthy as I am, He does not abandon me. He is willing to save, and waiting to be gracious to me. What is the inability of man to harmonize such declarations with some other parts of their creed, to the oath of the living God. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." It is the *dictate of parental solicitude*. The voice, not of a severe legislator or judge, but of a Father. A Father who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men—who says of the refractory child, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" who says of the relenting child, "Is Ephraim My dear Son?" How often does He assume this relation to deprive His greatness of terror, and render it our encouragement and confidence. He pities "as a father pitieth his children," and takes the heart of a mother for the image of tenderness. "As one whom his mother comforteth." "Can a woman forget her child?" She may. Ah! ye mothers, your affection is ice; your heart is iron compared with His!—"Yet will I not forget thee." Surely "he that loveth not, knoweth not God—for God is love." Can this encourage us to sin? Can we grieve His spirit? Can we hear Him saying in vain, "O do not that abominable thing which I hate?" "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness," etc.—*From Jay*.

### CAREFUL WALKING.—Verses 30-33.

After Moses was chosen mediator he directed the people to return to their tents, urged them to observe carefully all the commandments which they had received, and not to turn aside to the right hand or to the left, that it might be well with them. "This signifieth an exact care to walk in God's Law, as in the highway from which men may not turn aside, as in Deut. ii. 27."—*Ainsworth*.

**I. Human life is under God's direction.** To Israel the message was—"Get you into your tents again;" but to Moses, "Stand thou here by me." Thus some are appointed to one place, and others to another. God's law is given for guidance, laid down (for *law* means that which is *laid down* or *fixed*) to show us the way. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

**II. This direction is given by chosen agency.** Men often choose their own guides and miss their way. Intellect, education, and human laws are not sufficient. The Scriptures and the Christian ministry are the appointed means for instruction. 1. *The ministry of man.* Moses was chosen teacher and mediator between God and His people. Men must know God in the holy life and teaching of their fellow men, "Speak thou to us." 2. *The revelation of God.* Moses had not to speak his own, but the words which God had spoken to him. If we speak not according to the law we have no light—no truth in us. "I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them."

**III. This direction, given by chosen agency, is easily understood.** "Do, therefore, as the Lord your God hath commanded you." So plainly is the path

opened up that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."  
 1. There must be *no halting*. "Observe to do." The eye and heart must be fixed. Hesitate and linger not. Never fear, but humbly walk before God.  
 2. There must be *no turning aside*. "Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." "Let thine eyes look right on" (Prov. iv. 25-27), not behind, nor all around, but "straight before thee." Straightforward progress will ensure reward. Pray for perseverance and guidance. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'" 3. There must be *no partiality*. "Ye shall walk in *all* the ways." The obedience must be full, unreserved, and unwearied. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments (Ps. xi. 96).

IV. When the direction thus given is obeyed, the rewards will be great. "That ye may live, and that it may be well with you." "Verily there is a reward for the righteous," not of debt, but of sovereign grace. A *present* reward in temporal benefits and spiritual enjoyments. A *future* reward of eternal bliss (Is. xlviii. 18; Jer. vii. 23). In "keeping His commandments there is *great* reward."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 29. *God's wish for Israel*. 1. A true heart. 2. Sincere obedience. 3. Perpetual happiness. *Such a heart*. That heart that will enable us to fear the Legislator, and in thought, word, and deed keep all His commandments. But such a heart, so inclined, is an evidence of previous acceptance; and such conduct resulting from such a heart is the evidence of that character which belongs to a christian, and indicates one whose state has been changed in Christ, and whose character has been elevated by sanctification of the Holy Spirit.—*Cumming*.

*Perfect obedience*. 1. Its source—the heart. 2. Its extent. All commandments and always. 3. Its ruling principle—the fear of God. 4. Its blessed results—well with individuals "and their children for ever."

Ver. 30-33. 1. The honour conferred upon Moses. "Near" God. 2. The duty of Moses—"stand" in attentive, willing attitude, as mediator and teacher. "I stood between the Lord

and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount."

*God's manifestations in their effect upon men*. Repelling some and attracting others. This effect depends upon our state of mind and moral condition. *Teach them*—1. The *position* of a true teacher. "Here by me." 2. The *matter* of a true teacher. "All the commandments and the statutes and the judgments." 3. The *design* of a true teacher to produce obedience.

Ver. 33. *Walk in the ways*. 1. Specific direction. 2. Activity and progress in that direction. We must not simply know, but practice the commandments. We are ignorant, and require Divine instruction; weak, and need strength and support. Our hearts must be right, and we must be steadfast in His covenant (Ps. lxxviii. 37.) Like travellers in the way, we must look carefully to the end and be careful lest we miss the way.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1-5. *Law.* "These words" comprise the whole duty of man; and as interpreted by Christ, they are so comprehensive that there is no conceivable condition in which the human race can exist where these precepts are not applicable as a rule. The language of each is so brief, and so precise, as to be capable of furnishing a perfect guide for the moral government of man. It is so immeasurably superior in its character to that of all other nations that there is no way of accounting for its existence, except by ascribing it to Divine revelation. Infidels themselves are constrained to admit its high origin. For how came the Jews to possess so pure and admirable a law? How were they distinguished for such a sublime code of morality, while all other people, some of them far superior in civilisation and the arts to the Hebrews, fell far short of them in this respect? It was God who "spake all these words." (*Dr. Jamieson.*) The moral law is a copy of God's will, our spiritual directory; it shows us what sins to avoid, what duties to pursue. It has truth and goodness in it (*Neh. ix. 13*). Truth, for God spake it; and goodness, for there is nothing the commandment enjoins but it is for our good.—*Watson.*

Vers. 6, 7. *First.* This may well lead the van, and be set in front of all the commandments, because it is the foundation of all true religion. None will have cause to repent of cleaving to God and His service. Cardinal Wolsey said, "Oh, if I had served my God as I have my king, He would never have left me thus."—*Watson.*

Vers. 8-10. *Second.* People pray to the images of the gods, implore them on bended knees, sit or stand long days before them, throw them money, and sacrifice beasts to them with deep respect.—*Seneca.*

Ver. 11. *Third.* Remember the

commination and threatening in the text. Here is a *meiosis*—less is said and more intended. "He will not hold him guiltless;" that is, He will be severely avenged on such a one. Here the Lord speaks after the manner of a judge, who holds the court of assize. The judge is God himself; the accusers, Satan and a man's conscience; the charge is, "taking God's name in vain;" the accused is found guilty and condemned: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless."—*Watson.*

Vers. 12-15. *Fourth.* O, what a blessing is Sunday, interposed between the waves of worldly business, like the Divine path of the Israelites through Jordan. (*Wilberforce.*) The streams of religion run deeper or shallower, as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected. (*Calcott.*) Coleridge once said to a friend on Sunday morning, "I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two springs in every year."—*Bowes.*

Ver. 16. *Fifth.* Richard Knill so regarded this commandment, that he would not even go out as a missionary without his mother's consent. He said, "I know that God never smiles on a boy that breaks his mother's heart."—*Pul. Com.*

Ver. 17. *Sixth.* There is a close connection between anger and murder. "Killing is not mere blood shedding. Anger without cause is murder. Oppression of the weak is murder. Depriving a man of the means of getting a livelihood, to gratify revenge, is murder."—*Dr. Parker.*

Ver. 18. Adultery debases a person, and makes him resemble the beasts—Nay, it is worse than brutish; for some creatures void of reason, by the instinct of nature, observe some decorum and chastity. The turtle dove is a chaste creature, and keeps to its mate; and the stork wherever he flies, comes



into no nest but his own. Naturalists write that if a stork, leaving its own mate, joins with another, all the rest of the storks fall upon it and pull its feathers from it. Adultery is worse than brutish, it degrades a person of his honour.—*Watson*.

Ver. 19. *Eighth*. A man may rob God as well as his neighbour. He who wastes his employer's time is a thief. He who withholds just praise is a thief—social and literary thieving. He who detracts from the just honour of his fellow man is a thief. He who vows and does not pay is a thief.—*Dr. Parker*.

Ver. 20. *Ninth*. A man that hath no virtue in himself ever envieth virtue in others; for men's minds will either feed upon their own good or upon others' evil; and who wanteth the one will prey upon the other. (*Bacon*.) There would not be so many open mouths if there were not so many open ears.—*Bp. Hall*.

To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it.—

*Tennyson*.

Soft buzzing slander; silky moths

That eat an honest name.—*Thomson*.

Ver. 21. *Tenth*. The covetous man is like a greedy ostrich, which devours

any metal; but it is with an intent to feed upon it, and in effect it makes a shift to digest and excrete it. The avaricious man is like the foolish chough, which loves to steal money only to hide it.—*Archbp. Trench*.

The cloyed will,  
That satiate yet unsatisfied desire,  
That tub both filled and running,—

*Shakespeare*.

Vers. 22–25. *Great voice*. Richard Morris, a Baptist minister in England, when a young man attended as a spectator a funeral, which he had followed into St. Mary's Church, Stamford. His mind being solemnised and softened by the scene, the blast of six trumpets sounded together to set the evening watch, and reverberated through the dome, striking the whole audience with awe. The thought was vividly suggested to his mind that he must certainly hear the tremendous sound of the trump of God. With this impression upon his mind, Mr. Morris retired to his room and prayed to that God whom he knew would be his judge. His prayer was heard, and he began a life of religion and usefulness. This trifling occurrence arrested attention, gave rise to workings of conscience which ended in conversion.—*Whitecross*.

## CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses had rehearsed the law, reminded the people of the circumstances in which it was given, and now he sets forth its essential and fundamental doctrines, the nature and attributes of God and the mode of worshipping Him.

1. Commandments, *lit.*, commandment (sing. noun), equivalent to “the law,” cf. iv. 44, *i.e.*, the sum and substance of all that Jehovah had given (cf. *Keil*). Statutes, etc., explanatory of the command.

2. Reason for giving law to awaken fear and obedience to every injunction.

3. Constant fear of God would result in prosperity and increase of the nation. cf. Gen. xii. 1; xvii. 6 Ex. iii. 8, 17.

4–9. The exposition now begins with a declaration concerning Jehovah (Elohim plu.). This “does not relate to the unity of God, but simply states that to Him alone, the name *Jehovah* rightfully belongs, as the one absolute God to whom no other *Elohim* can be compared, cf. Zech. xiv. 9.”—*Keil*.

5 To this one God, who is Israel's God, a love must be given, with *the heart*, seat of feeling and affection; *the soul*, thy breath, the vital spirit, or rational soul, capable of intelligence and thought, Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 30; Luke x. 27; *strength* of body and soul.

6, 7. True love will be regulated by regard to the commandments, which must be laid up in *the heart*, ever present to thought and will; taught to children, and talked about on all fitting occasions. *Teach, lit.*, whet or sharpen, a figure for earnest and frequent instruction.

8. *Sign*, token, memorial, as rings used on wrists and fingers containing religious sentiment, John iii. 33; 2 Tim. ii. 19. Frontlets, Ex. xiii. 16. Moses here turns to good account usages prevalent in his times, and still common in the East. (See *Speak Com.*)

9. Posts, Ex. xii. 7; Deut. xi. 20; Job xix. 23, 25.

10-15. After specific duties, Moses gives warnings and cautions against dangers to which prosperity would expose them, viz., of forgetting God and His mercies. Entrance into Canaan brought them into possessions for which they did not labour with their own hands; beautiful towns, houses full of good things, wells of water, vineyards and olive plantations. Swearing (ver. 13) refers to judicial oaths in court. "Moses refers to legal swearing; our Lord to swearing in common conversation." God's worship precludes idolatry (vers. 14, 15), which a jealous God will not endure, but punish with destruction from the face of the earth.

16-19. Tempting God by murmuring and unbelief as at *Massah*, i.e., Rephidim (Ex. xvii. 1-7), is forbidden; diligent observance of commandments and right-doing are urged. To cast out, (v. 19) the casting out, the result of obedience. Ex. xxiii. 27; xxxiv. 11.

20-25. Directions for the instruction of children more fully given than in ver. 7. Signs (22) and wonders, cf. iv. 34. Mighty hand, exercise of great power. Ps. cv. 23 28. *ur good*, (24), first reason for serving God, it is right; other blessings follow. Righteousness, i.e., observance of law constitutes their title to the land and gives them acceptance with God. Before the Lord, in his right and according to his judgment, cf. Ps. lvi. 13; cxvi. 9.

### THE FEAR OF GOD THE END OF THE COMMANDMENTS.—Verses 1-3.

Two objects are indicated in these verses as sought by the Law-giver in thus expounding anew these important duties. He aims at awakening a holy fear of God in the heart of his people; a fear which shall manifest itself in steadfast fulfilment of the covenant; and he seeks no less the temporal prosperity of Israel, which is shown as a certain result upon such fidelity. 'Thus the glory of God and the welfare of man are seen to be the grand ends he has in view.—*Speak. Com.*

I. The Commandments of God should be the rule of Life. "That ye might do them." Plato and other philosophers taught that perfection consisted in conformity to certain *forms* or *ideas* laid down for man by his Creator. But for one thing to be the standard or measure of another it must be *fixed* and true. Sophists would persuade us that there is nothing fixed and permanent. Our senses deceive us, the laws of nature change, right and wrong, virtue and vice, are fancies and vary with individual feelings and tastes. But God's law is unchangeable, His truth is sure and eternal. He has given rules for moral life and conduct. Our own sensations must not be set forth, our own opinions exalted into standards of truth. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

II. The fear of God is the most powerful principle to produce obedience to this rule. Love to the Lawgiver begets respect for his law. We cannot honour a master, nor be happy in his service without love for his character. Affection influences the will and prompts to happy obedience. Service from any other motive would not be disinterested and true, either in religion or daily life. The fear, or the love of God in the heart therefore, is the only power to produce loyal obedience to God.

"I cannot worship what I cannot love."

**III. To beget this obedience is the design of religious instruction.** "The Lord your God commanded to teach you." We must know a person before we can love and serve him; so the law of God must be known before it can be observed. The people must be taught the character and will of God. The children must be trained and educated, not for their own glory, nor that of their parents, but for the service and glory of God. Obedience to God's law must be the design of family training and economy. "Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may *hear*, and that they may *learn* and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law."

**IV. The results of religious instruction and obedience to God's law will be beneficent.** Since the law of God consults our highest good, obedience will always be to our interest. God mercifully teaches what is good, and promises to bestow that good upon us. In various ways, personal and social, temporal and spiritual, benefits come to help us to remember Him who is "the highest good," "God over all, and blessed for evermore." 1. *In personal happiness.* "Well with thee" in body, mind, and estate. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him" (Isa. iii. 10). "But it shall not be well with the wicked because he feareth not before God" (Ecc. viii. 13). 2. *In length of life.* "That thy days may be prolonged." "The wicked shall not live out half their days." 3. *In the increase of posterity.* "That ye may increase mightily." Virtue always tends to promote health, material prosperity, and national welfare. Without recognition of God and obedience to His commands, we cannot secure earthly or heavenly inheritance "in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

#### DIVINE REQUIREMENTS.—Verses 4, 5.

These verses assert that Jehovah is one, indivisible and supreme God, and worthy of love supreme and undivided. It is not enough to *hear*, we must obey and obey with all the heart and soul.

**I. God is worthy of our love and service.** We love a person for what he is in himself and for what he does to others. God is excellent and exalted in himself. He alone is God, and therefore deserves our homage. Goethe taught that "beauty, truth and goodness" are the objects of human worship. But this is "the religion of culture," the worship of the "creature rather than the Creator," and does not satisfy personal wants. God is a Living Being, on whom we can think and with whom we can converse—the centre and cause of all beauty, goodness and truth. In Him these are objects for worship, and subjects for enjoyment. He does good, makes good and communicates His blessings unto His creatures. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power."

**II. God requires us to love and serve Him with entire self-surrender.** The terms used to indicate this are most comprehensive. 1. *Affectionately*, "with all thine heart," without indolence, unfaithfulness or half-heartedness. With fervent, undivided affection. If the heart, the whole heart be withheld, apostacy will be the result. 2. *Intelligently*, "with all thy mind," (Mark xii. 30; Luke x. 27). The intellect and understanding must be concerned as well as the heart. God's service is not a blind, unreasonable service. "We know what we worship." 3. *Energetically*, "with all thy might" of will and active powers. If not free and cheerful, it is slavish and irksome. "If ye be willing and obedient," (Isa. i. 19). 4. *Entirely*, "with



all thy soul." It must be sincere and constant, not superficial but "rooted in love," (Eph. iii. 17). God must be loved above all creatures, with all our powers and with all the energy of those powers. "The royal law according to the scripture."

III. God's relationship to us is a motive to prompt this required service. "The Lord thy God." Jehovah was Israel's God and had shown Himself such. Nothing can touch the will, and excite to motion which we do not perceive and appreciate. What is out of the view of mind and heart cannot affect them. God's presence had been seen and His goodness displayed in wonderful ways. He made a covenant with Israel, claimed them for His people, and gave them every reason to honour and obey Him. "I am the Lord thy God."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *Hearing and doing.* "Hear O Israel and observe to do it." 1. *The Word heard.* Man deaf and blind in spiritual things. "Having ears, he hears not; having eyes he sees not." Only when God speaks does the heart open (Lydia) with new power of attention and interest. "Be more ready to hear." 2. *The Word considered.* "Observe"—attendance is not attention—eyes and ears must be open. "In order to learn," says Coleridge, "we must attend; in order to profit by what we have learnt, we must think." "Take heed how ye hear." 3. *The Word obeyed.* "Do it." We look for novelty and not for edification. "Our great object is to be impressed and affected, and to have old and new truths reduced to experience and practice."—*Judge Hale.*

Ver. 4. *The unity of God.* 1. *The centre of Israel's belief.* How sound in principle, elevated in tone and powerful in moral influence, compared with heathen religions! 2. *The foundation of Israel's polity.* Polytheism was the basis of other social fabrics. "This clause not merely forbids polytheism, but also syncretism, which reduces the one absolute God, as King over all the earth, to a national deity, a Baal (Hos. ii. 18), and in fact every form of theism and deism, which creates for itself a supreme God according to philosophical abstractions and ideas" (*Keil*). 3. *The law of harmony in our moral constitution.* The mind is not

capable of containing more than one object at a time. The heart and affections can only be loyally attached to one Sovereign, and fully developed by one person.

Ver. 4, 5. 1. *The command.* "Hear, O Israel." God seeks to make us attentive to what He is in Himself, and what He is to us—to check our presumption—kindle our affection and dissipate our fear. 2. *The duty.* Love God with all thine heart. First the heart and then the deed. We must first *be* right before we can *do* right. "It is greater to conquer by means of the heart, than to conquer the heart," says Schiller. "Give me thine heart." 3. *The method of performing this duty.* (a) Willingly. God sometimes accepts the will for the deed; never the deed without the will. (b) Sincerely. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart (2 Chron. xxv. 2). (c) Constantly. "Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. cvi. 3).

Moral life proceeds *from* the heart, and manifests itself without, *in* the three forms of activity indicated. The impulse Godward proceeds *from* the heart, and is realised in the life *through* the affection, which feeds on that supreme object; *through* the will, which consecrates itself actively to the accomplishment of His will; and *through* the mind which pursues the track of His thoughts in all His works.—*Godet.*

THE METHOD OF PRESERVING THE DIVINE LAW.—*Verses 6-9.*

To keep a sense of duty in their minds, it was ordered that Israel should carry great principles into daily life. A system of parental instruction was instituted, and provision was made for the remembrance of the commandments in most familiar and oft-recurring scenes of life. The means of preserving religion are minutely specified.

**I. In personal experience.** “Shall be in thine heart.” The memory may be good and the tongue glib without any feeling of heart. The truth must not only be received by the mind, but deposited and warmed by the heart. We must understand, value and love the Bible. Since we are in danger of losing the things, if we forget the words: “these words” must be matters of experience and conversation. Our soul must be brought under their influence and direction. “The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide” (Ps. xxxvii. 31).

**II. In home training.** “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. Children are ignorant and self-willed. They will never instinctively or intuitively develop into saints. And while their secular education must not be forgotten their religious training must be first and most diligent. This may be given.

1. *In various ways.* In domestic intercourse, “when thou sittest in *thine* house;” in ordinary walking, “when thou *walkest* by the way;” in the times of the day, “when thou liest *down* and risest *up*;” by common representations, “for *signs* and *frontlets*,” and by constant writing, “thou shalt *write* them.”
2. *In diligent methods.* “Diligently,” sharpen up the children by earnest, assiduous and repeated instruction. As tools are prepared for work, so children should be taught for God and prepared for life.

**III. In Religious Conversation.** “Talk of them.” In the present age knowledge is spread by writing more than by speech. In earlier ages oral communications were the means of instruction. The living voice is still a great power in the world, and its mighty influence will be felt in future generations. Conversation was one of the methods employed by Jewish doctors and Jesus Himself, for imparting knowledge. Among friends and companions, in the domestic and social circle, in walking in a journey and in retiring to rest, we may converse about Divine things. “I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.” Ps. cxix. 46.

PARENTAL OBLIGATION.—*Verse 7, 8.*

In these verses it appears—(1) That parents are bound to give their children a religious education, to sow in their hearts the seeds of scriptural truth, to teach them the elements of christian doctrine, to inculcate upon them the observance of moral duties, and to beget in them an attachment to the ordinances of religion, in their attendance on which we may expect the communication of the grace of the Holy Spirit, to render the word of truth, the power of God unto their salvation. (2) God’s testimonies must not only be taught to our children, but the utmost diligence must be used to make them understand them. “Thou shalt teach them diligently.” That is, again and again, as one who whets a blunt instrument in order to sharpen it, which is done by *reiterated friction or grinding*. This part of parental duty is a most difficult task, and it requires much patience, much prudence, much judgment and much piety in the parents, to enable them to do this good, this most important work, in the best and most

effectual manner. (3) Parents are required to embrace every opportunity of inculcating the Divine commands upon their children. 1. This duty must be performed at home and abroad; "When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way." 2. It must be done in the night season and in the daytime; "when thou liest down and when thou risest up." (4) This command shows that every father had access to scripture, in a language which he and his children understood. Moses entertained no fear that the people would misinterpret it, or wrest it to their destruction. It is probable that many a Jew did so; nevertheless, that was no reason against every Jew possessing a copy of the law. The fact is, that under the Jewish law, the scriptures were put into the hands of all kinds of persons, young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned, priest and people, with a command to read them and teach them to others, so that faith of all might rest on the foundation.—*Rev. J. Wilson.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 6, 7. *The Bible—the Family Book.*** To be read and taught in the family to promote personal piety and religious education. "The most precious legacy you can leave your children is a thoroughly sound Christian education. This will never be finally and for ever forgotten; for in the worst and most distant aberration from God, some early light struck out in the early years of childhood, will leap like a live spark from memory, as was the case with John Newton, when a prodigal at the helm in a tempestuous sea—the text forgotten for twenty years, but taught him by his mother in the nursery, was the first on which turned his everlasting and happy destiny.—*Dr. Cumming.*

**Ver. 7. Children should be taught the principles which they understand not.** (1.) That they might have occasion much to think of the things that are so much and commonly urged. (2.) That if any extremity should come, they might have certain seeds of comfort and direction to guide and support them. (3.) That their condemnation might be more just, if having these so much in their mouths, they should not get something of them into their hearts.—*Trapp.*

**Ver. 9. "Write them upon the posts."** 1. At the time this command was given there were few written copies of the whole law, and the people had it read to them only at the feast of tabernacles. God, therefore, seemed to have appointed, at least for the present, that some select sentences of the law should *literally* be written upon their gates and walls, or on slips of parchment, to be worn about their wrists, or bound upon their foreheads. 2. The *spirit* of the command, however, and the chief thing intended, undoubtedly was that they should give all diligence, and use all means to keep God's laws always in remembrance; as men frequently bind something upon their hands or put something before their eyes, to prevent forgetfulness of a thing that they much desire to remember. But the Jews, forgetting the *spirit* and design of this precept, used these things as superstitious people do amulets or charms. They used also to put these slips of parchment into a piece of cane, or other hollow wood, and fasten that to the door of their houses, and of each particular door in them, and as often as they go in and out they make it a part of their devotion to touch the parchment and kiss it.—*J. Wilson.*



THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 10-12.*

Moses anticipates the time when Israel will come into possession of Canaan with all the good promised. But he also sees the dangers to which this prosperity will expose them—forgetfulness, idolatry (ver. 14) and distrust (ver. 16). He warns them against these dangers, and describes the remedy. “Forewarned, forearmed.”

**I. Prosperity renders the heart insensible when we should be grateful** “When thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord.” In poverty we despond, murmur or blaspheme; in prosperity we deny God (Prov. xxx. 9). “*Prosperity doth best discover vices,*” says Bacon. Exaltation often intoxicates, and blessings easily gained are not often valued. We are most sensible of things which cost us dearly; but unmindful of the giver when the gifts come easily and freely. We riot in carnal luxuries and the heart becomes effeminate and self-indulgent, hardened to the reproofs of the Divine law and to the goodness and claims of the Lawgiver. “They did eat, and were filled, and became fat (*senseless, doltish, cf. Is. vi. 10, Neh. ix. 25.*)

**II. Prosperity begets pride when we should be humble.** Man depends upon God for everything, yet often casts off God, expects nothing and fears nothing from Him. He is proud of rank, talent, and acquisitions, like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30). We forget our need of God, our obligations to Him, and become self-sufficient instead of humble. “In all time of our wealth, Good Lord deliver us.”

**III. Prosperity lulls into carnal security when we should be watchful.** “Beware” of the danger and guard against it. A self-indulgent life, incapacitates for vigorous watchful obedience to God’s commands. Nature is subdued by that which feeds it, its sensitiveness and spirituality die away, and carnal security leads to ease and perfect indifference.

“O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,  
Fat minds and ever grovelling on the ground.”—*Dryden.*

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.—*Verses 12-15.*

When we give our thoughts and hearts to the world God is soon forgotten. He is displaced and ignored, and we become guilty of ingratitude, robbery, and idolatry.

**I. The danger pointed out.** “Beware, lest thou forget God.” 1. *Non-recognition of God’s presence.* Even amid sensible and awful displays of that presence “they forgot God and His wonders that He had showed them.” 2. *Disregard of God’s providence.* “Which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt.” A providence most constant and striking, yet despised when they should have remembered it most. “They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea (Ps. cvi. 7).” 3. *Disobedience to God’s law.* We cannot serve and obey those whom we forget. God has the greatest claim upon our gratitude and love. But “when the danger is past God is forgotten.” Men cry for mercy in trouble and adversity, but when these are changed for sunshine and substance “they forsake God who made them, and lightly esteem His law.”

“Satan now is wiser than of yore,  
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.”—*Pope.*

**II. The Method of avoiding this danger specified.** God provides safeguards against dangers into which we are apt to fall. Some are given in these words:

1. *The fear of God.* "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God." Reverence for God is the great preservative from sin. On this principle Abraham educated his children and governed his household. Joseph feared to offend God and was directed to wisest counsels. "Happy is the man that feareth alway." 2. *Obedience to God.* "Serve Him." We cannot forget God if we walk with Him and continually obey His will. Servants must not neglect their master's commands, nor soldiers rush out of the ranks. Disobedience is disrespectful, disloyal, and insolent. "Be not hasty to go out of his sight." 3. *Non-conformity to evil customs.* "Ye shall not go after other Gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you," (ver. 14.) Israel would be tempted by the license and indulgence of idol worship around them. Numbers influence and attract men. The fashions, the principles, and the maxims of the world govern many professors. But we must not join a majority in any sinful cause, however prevalent and popular. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." 4. *Public confession of God.* "And shalt swear by His name." God is the source of truth and the avenger of wrong. In all covenants and appeals we must regard Him. In ordinary intercourse and in common affairs of life we must be truthful. We must recognise the presence and majesty of God and not assert anything but what is right. God in the fulfilment of His word must be recognised as our example of faithfulness. "He that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth" (*lit. the God of Amen, i.e., firm and true, cf. Rev. iii. 14; xix. 11*) Is. lxxv. 16.

### THE FORBIDDEN PATH.—Verses 14–15.

In all our hearts there is a tendency to depart from God, to forget what He commands, "to go after" what He forbids. This forbidden path is described—

1. *It is entered by many.* The path of "the people," "the gods" of the age. But the *vox populi* is not always the *vox Dei*. Idolatry of every kind is the root and nourisher of error and superstition—the expression and epitome of human nature—the foul dishonour to God and His supremacy. "Go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them" (Jer. xxv. 6). 2. *It is offensive to God.* It stirs up God's anger and rouses His jealousy. Bp. Patrick observes, that we never find in law or prophets, *anger*, or *fury*, or *jealousy* or *indignation*, attributed to God, but upon occasion of idolatry. 3. *It is destructive in its end.* "Destroy thee from off the face of the earth." Idolatry corrupts the holy and petrifies the heart. Like a withering mildew it overspreads the earth and blights the nations. God has condemned and cursed it, and will punish all who are guilty. The warning voice from above should be heard; "Ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord God."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 13. *Threefold characteristics of God's service.* 1. God to be honoured. 2. God to be feared. 3. God to be served. "*Not forgetting*" is described from a positive point of view as fearing God, *serving Him*, and *swearing by His name*. Fear is placed first, as

the fundamental characteristic of the Israelitish worship of God. It was no slavish fear, but simply the holy awe of a sinner before the holy God, which includes love rather than excludes it. "Fearing" is a matter of the heart; "serving," a matter of working and

striving; and "swearing in His name," the practical manifestation of the worship of God in word and conversation.—*Keil*.

Ver. 13-16. 1. The fear of God the principle of service. 2. The preventative from idolatry (vers. 14, 15). 3. The remedy for unbelief.

Vers. 14, 15. *Ye shall not go after*. 1. The course forbidden. 2. The warnings to keep from it; God's anger and God's jealousy. 3. The consequences of disregarding these warnings. "Destroy thee from off the face of the earth." When lesser warnings will not serve, God looks into His quiver for

deadly arrows." "From hardness of heart," etc. *Serving God*. Inquire— I. What it is to serve God. 1. To dedicate ourselves wholly to Him. 2. To make His law the rule of our life. 3. To endeavour to please Him in all things. II. Why should we serve Him? Because He is—1. Our Maker. 2. Our Preserver. 3. Our Redeemer. 4. Our Master by covenant. III. The nature of the exhortation here given. 1. Directions: serve Him scripturally, obediently, willingly, cheerfully, faithfully, etc. 2. Motives: This is the end of your creation and of all God's mercies to you; it is the work of heaven, and will be well rewarded.—*Wm. Stevens*.

### TEMPTING GOD.—*Verse 16.*

The word "tempt," here means to *try to prove*; and mindful of the circumstances alluded to God was not only provoked, but "tested" in His power and goodness. This sin we are warned against, for the apostle distinctly recognises that events in Israel's history were typical and filled with Divine purpose and warning. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples (*types, patterns* to admonish and instruct" 1 Cor. x. ii.) How did Israel and how can we tempt God?

1. **By doubting God's presence and power to help.** God was present with them night and day in the wonderful pillar, yet they cried, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. xvii. 7.) God had destroyed their enemies, delivered them from famine and danger, yet they "tempted God in their hearts" and cried in unbelief, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. lxxviii. 18-20.) We murmur at our daily mercies—the manna and the stream; count actual enjoyments nothing, if they do not conform to our fancy; and pine for some imaginary good. When we circumscribe to infinite wisdom, mistrust omnipotent power to accomplish His purpose, we "limit (*sign, requiring miracle* to satisfy us) the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 41.)

II. **By rebelling against God's authority.** We find fault with God's will, set up our own will instead, and thus insult God. At the Red Sea and the waters of Marah, in the wilderness of sin and in Rephidim, they provoked God their Creator and Lawgiver. They were base enough to deny His presence, doubt His power, and abuse His servant. In their wicked disposition "they sinned still," went on sinning and rebelling, and were not "in a mood to be convinced." "Yea, they spake against God."

III. **By provoking God's patience.** He led them in the wilderness, gave them plentiful supplies, but their gratitude was not commensurate with His goodness. "How often did they provoke Him?" Times enough did they rebel, and were as constant in provocation as God was in kindness. "They have tempted me these ten times" (*i.e.*, often and in full measure), Num. xiv. 22; but at last God's patience was provoked, and they were punished for their sins. God is insensible to our conduct. We may vex His Holy Spirit, which



would have been long ago withdrawn if God had not been merciful to us. We are dependent, and need God's guidance and grace; let us not "grieve Him in the desert." As Israel tried God by longing for the things left behind in Egypt and distrusted for the future, so we may tempt and offend God by hankering after pleasures which are forbidden, longing for that liberty in sin from which Christ has delivered us. "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Cor. x. 9).

### THE WAY OF LIFE AND SAFETY.—*Verses 17-19.*

God is never indifferent to His claims upon us. Epicurus depicted his gods as totally regardless, and scorning the affairs of earth. But our God has "set his heart on man," desires his eternal good, and points out the way to secure it. Amid the darkness and dangers of our journey God has provided help, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. vi. 23).

**I. A way in which God's word must be our constant guide.** "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God." The way has not to be invented or found out; it is revealed. We have not to *make*, but *keep* the command. "The way of life is above to the wise." It is of heavenly, not of earthly origin, neither devised nor discerned by foolish men. We must constantly recognise and devoutly consult God's word as our guide in our journey. 1. *Carefully*, as travellers anxious to be right and not lose the way. Some give careless service to God, and careless attention to His word. There must be no cold and formal observance, but effort to please and obey. 2. *Earnestly*. Diligence signifies not only energy and activity, but heart and affection. Heartiness and love must be displayed (*Diligently* the Latin for *lovingly*). When Aristotle was asked what benefit he had derived from his philosophy, he replied: "I have learnt to do without constraint that which others do from fear of the law." "I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." 3. *Constantly*. Not fitful or accidental, but patient and continual regard. Many forget and forsake the law. If it is displeasing to us, we easily neglect it; but when our hearts and minds are fixed upon it, then we love and practise it continually. When governed by the Word we are wise, safe, and strong. "Happy is the mind to which the word is a special companion," says Bernard (*cf.* Ps. cxix. 7, 24; Prov. vi. 22).

**II. A way in which God's will must be our constant regard.** "Do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord." The will of God is the standard of duty, and this must not be lowered to meet the opinions and wishes of men. It is not what is useful or expedient before men, but what is *right before God*. That alone is right which is pleasing to Him, which He commands, and which He requires from us. Conformity to God's will and character must be the aim of our life. In this respect Christ is our example, who came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John vi. 29).

**III. A way which leads to our present and future good.** Religion confers the highest blessings upon us. The will of God is the fountain of all happiness, and the service of God the source of well being. 1. *Our present good*. "That it may be well with thee." If it is not well with us, if we are not benefited by serving God, we may suspect something to be wrong. Our thoughts, employments, and pursuits may be opposed to God's will, and then it cannot be well with us. "It shall be well with them that fear God, but it shall not be

well with the wicked." 2. *Our future good.* Man has a future of weal or woe. To forget this future is simply to court destruction. But continual regard to God's will, and dependence upon God's grace (*a*) *will help us to overcome enemies.* "To cast out all thine enemies from before thee." We cannot overcome in our own attitude and strength. God dislodges our enemies, and clears our way to heaven (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 22; Jos. xxiv. 8); (*b*) *will secure to us the inheritance*—residence on earth, progress and grace in Christian life, and heaven at length. Thus do the Scriptures set before us the way of life. Are we walking in it? "What man is he that desireth life and loveth (good days, or days of good, Seventy) many days, that he may see good" (Ps. xxxiv. 12).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Tempting God* (Ps. lxxviii. 18). They tempted God, tried His patience over and over again, made as if were another experiment upon it, and, from the expression of "*tempting Him in their heart*," it would seem as if they had made it a thing of mental calculation whether He would still bear with them (*T. Chalmers* on Ps. lxxviii. 18). 1. They tempted God's patience. 2. They tempted God's wisdom. 3. They tempted God's power. 4. They tempted God's wrath. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.—*Treasury of David.*

Ver. 17. Notice. 1. The Lawgiver. "The Lord your God." 2. The au-

thority interposed. Testimonies and statutes "which He commanded thee." 3. The regard for this authority required. "Keep the commandments."

Vers. 17–19. 1. The end desired—"good." 2. The method of securing it. Filial obedience to God. 3. The results which follow. "Possess the good land," etc.

The *charge of Moses to Israel.* In this passage we remark—I. A solemn charge given. 1. Hear the word of the Lord. 2. Observe the word of the Lord, doctrine, precept, promise. 3. Obey the word of the Lord. II. Important benefits proposed. 1. Safety. 2. Prosperity. 3. Peaceful possession of Canaan.—*Zeta.*

### THE RELIGION OF ENQUIRY.—Verses 20–25.

God's remarkable dealings with His people could not fail to excite their curiosity even to the latest generations. There was an express injunction that in every succeeding age they should carefully acquaint their children with the facts of their history. There must be a perpetual memorial of their great deliverance and a profound reverence in the mind of the nation of that Supreme Power to whom they were indebted for their civil and religious privileges. Questions were to be encouraged, parents were to answer questions by explaining divine institutions, that the laws of God might be perpetuated, family religion nourished, and national good secured.

I. The Religion of the Bible cultivates free enquiry. "When thy son asketh thee what mean the testimonies." Man thinks. Reason is the attribute of his soul. The religion for man must not therefore overlook his intellect. Christianity is adapted to man in his capacity for knowledge and in his power to reason and conclude from that knowledge. "Come let us *reason* together," is the language of our Creator. Many declare that Christianity is only fit for the ignorant and weak minded, and that it affords no scope for free enquiry.

But it affords the finest scope for reason in which the mind can be exercised. Examination and enquiry are demanded from everyone. We are to "*think* on these things," to "*search* the scriptures," and "*prove* all things (test like money changers) and hold fast that which is good" (2 Thes. v. 21).

**II. God has made provision for the demands of free enquiry.** We cannot help but ask "from whence am I and whither am I going?" "How can man be just with God?" "What mean the testimonies," etc. Solemn questions will prompt themselves which neither the philosophy of man nor the light of nature can answer. But God answers man's enquiries—1. *In the facts of history.* "We were bondsmen in Egypt." In the Bible we have a record of facts beginning with the Creation and leading us through various dispensations to the consummation of God's purpose in the death and work of Christ. In the lives of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles, in the events of Jewish history and in the works of Jesus Christ we have grand historic facts, which are the basis of religion, the foundation of our faith, and the elements, "the rudiments of childhood's lessons" (cf. Gal. iii. 24; iv. 3). 2. *In the doctrines of Scripture.* Upon the facts of history the doctrines of religion are built. There is a growing tendency to take ideas without facts; to separate events from their supernatural surroundings; and to find in Scripture "a legendary summary of primitive belief." But in the facts and doctrines of Christianity God has provided for the necessities of our nature and not left us to "cunningly devised fables." 3. *In the records of Providence.* God's power and presence were seen in His dealings with Israel. His purpose and promise have been fulfilled in the history of nations. The system of Providence is accommodatory to our nature in teaching by sensible signs and striking events. "The Lord showed signs and wonders."

**III. It is our interest to enquire and possess this Religion.** The facts and doctrines of Scripture must be confirmed in our experience and traced in our life conduct. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." If we fear God and keep His commandments we shall realise the power of God to help; the grace of God to pardon and renew, the need of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide. 1. *It will be for our good,* verse 24. To investigate truth, to follow God will not only be enjoyment but "our good." Our views will be enlarged, our convictions deepened, and we shall find that every event of Providence and every command of God contribute to "our good always." 2. *It will be for our righteousness* (ver. 25). Just as loyal obedience secured to Israel their standing and inheritance, so Christians can only justify their claims and position as God's people by holy life. They are God's peculiar people, redeemed to serve Him and to train future generations in their holy faith. Just as youth are imbued with righteousness and truth, and posterity taught the will and works of God, will the Christian church and the nation have within themselves the principle of perpetuation and the security of natural life and religious position. "That they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."

#### A WONDERFUL HISTORY.—Verses 21-23.

Israel's history from first to last is a process of moral education. In its gradual progress, its divine symbols and its spiritual design, we see divine purpose comprehend in the good of the nation and the redemption of the world. In these words we have two or three remarkable epochs or displays filled with moral instruction.

**I. The Great Deliverance.** "The Lord brought us out of Egypt." For  
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generations Israel had been oppressed and held in bondage most bitter. But in "the self-same day" of promise, they were rescued without delay. Slavery ended, task-masters gone and liberty gained! Salvation most complete and joy unspeakable. All escaped. Promises and deliverance in Christ to those in bondage of sin and death. He gives life, liberty, joy and glory.

**II. The wonderful way in which it was accomplished.** 1. *By Divine might.* "With a mighty hand." Pharaoh could not resist the omnipotence of God. The "strong man armed" can only "keep his palace" until "the stronger than he cometh." 2. *By marvellous deeds.* "Signs and wonders, great and sore." Most alarming were the judgments of God upon Egypt. God touched the support of life and the objects of worship—annoyed with pain and disease—turned the wealthy land into a wilderness. Then came the dark shadow and finally the stroke of death itself upon "the chief of all their strength." Judgments upon sin may be light at first, but if disregarded will destroy in the end the wicked treasure, "wrath against the day of wrath," "because of the blindness (*hardness*) of their hearts" (Eph. iv. 18).

**III. The Gracious Design.** "To give us the land." Canaan, acquired, not by valour and human skill, a gift of God. "To give us." Patriarchs had been sojourners and strangers there; now descendants in full possession. 1. *An inheritance promised* "which he sware unto our fathers." The covenant 400 years before now to be established; God never forgets. "Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out." (*Buffon*). With Him a thousand years as one day (Ps. xc. 4). 2. *An inheritance into which they were guided.* "He brought us out, that He might bring us in." Canaan not only offered, but Israel helped to get it. The way long, the dangers great, but the Angel of the Covenant never forsook them. God will guide us by the written word and the Holy Spirit if we follow Him. "I will instruct thee."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 20-21. Notice—1. Divine Institutions have meaning and design. 2. Our duty to enquire about them. 3. Children especially should be encouraged to question, etc. A Persian philosopher was asked by what method he had acquired so much knowledge, answered, "By not being prevented by shame from asking questions when I am ignorant."

Ver. 20. *The Children's Question.* 1. Children to be encouraged to seek knowledge concerning the Bible and the Church. 2. Patiently and wisely explain, doctrines, duties and privileges. 3. Early teach children to acknowledge God and refer deliverances and all other blessings to Him. 4. Believe that the Holy Spirit will impress youthful hearts with what they see and hear in God's house. *The School in the Family*, pupils, teachers, lessons

to be learned, and benefit of practising them.

Vers. 24-25. *God's commands, our life and righteousness.* 1. Israel to be a separated people (ver. 23). 2. Their continued existence depended upon obedience to God (ver. 24). 3. In this continued existence would be the justification of their character and position (ver. 25). "Every Israelite who yielded an external obedience to the Mosaic law was termed *righteous*, and had a claim in virtue of that obedience, to the land of Canaan; so that doing these things, he lived by them (Lev. xviii. 5; Deut. v. 33). The import of the statement in these verses, then, is that a faithful observance of "all these commandments" should constitute their title to the promised blessings of the covenant." —*Jamieson*.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

**Ver. 1-3. Fear.** This fear of God is the foundation of religion; for the great support of virtue among men is the sense upon their minds of a supreme Governor and Judge of the universe, who will finally and effectually reward what is in itself essentially worthy of reward, and punishment what is worthy of punishment. Consequently fear brings us into subjection to God's authority and enforces the practice of duty; for the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil. (*Duty of Man*) **Love.** Our affections are drawn to an attractive object as naturally as iron is charmed by loadstone. God made us to love; and when brought near to such an object our feelings intertwine themselves around it, as the soft and pliant tendrils of the vine do around the support it clothes with leaves, and hangs with purple clusters. Such analogy is there between the laws of mind and matter.—*Dr. Guthrie.*

**Ver. 4-5. One Lord.** We believe God to be one, so we believe Him to be in such manner one, that there cannot possibly be another, for all things must derive their being from Him, and whatsoever being has its existence from another cannot be God, but must be a creature. This unity of God is of universal obligation to be believed that we may be fixed as to the object of our worship, and place our religious adoration there only, where it is due; and also that we may give Him that honour, which is due to Him alone; part whereof is, that we have no other Gods but one, in him only must we trust and love with all our hearts, because He only is infinite goodness, beauty and glory.

**Vers. 6-9. Write.** It is now customary among the Arabs, and the Oriental nations, to write passages of the Koran, and other moral sentences, on the gates of cities, walls, and doorposts.—*Dr. Boothroyd.*

**Teach.** It was the godly practice of the patriarchs to instruct their

children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the Gospel, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity.—*Geo. Swinnoek.*

**Vers. 10-12. Forget.** Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day.—*Eliza Cook*

**Vers. 12-15. Forget God.** Men who put their supreme idea of life in self-indulgence, cannot understand what God means, who makes self-exertion, in Himself, in angelic powers, in all His creatures, the test of real being. If men are seeking to be supine, to have infinite enjoyment without earning it, and God is determined they shall be stirred up by storms of hope and fear, pain and ease, in order that they may grow and develop, of course they cannot understand Him or His administration. The prizes in this world are placed where those men shall get them who by development, by opening and educating their powers, seek them.—*Beecher.*

**Vers. 14-16. Tempt.** Although God cannot be tempted with evil, he may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with His dealings, virtually ask that He will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots

him to do or to bear, is he not to be charged with provoking God to change His purposes? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce Him to swerve from His plans, though every one of these plans has been settled by infinite wisdom. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than He has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed.—*H. Melvill.*

Vers. 20-25. *What mean the testimonies?* The mother of a family was married to an infidel, who made a jest of religion in presence of his own children; yet she succeeded in bringing them all up in the fear of the Lord. I one day asked her how she

preserved them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own? She answered: "Because to the authority of a father I did not oppose the authority of a mother, but that of God. From earliest years my children have always seen the Bible upon the table. This Holy Book has constituted the whole of their religious instruction. I was silent that I might allow it to speak. Did they propose a question; did they commit any fault; did they perform any good action; I opened the Bible, and the Bible answered, reprov'd or encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought the prodigy which surprises you" (*A. Monod*). "Young man, attend to the voice of one who possesses certain degree of fame in the world," said Dr. Samuel Johnson, "and who will shortly appear before his Maker—read the Bible every day of your life."

## CHAPTER VII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Israel is forwarned against the idolatry of the people whose country they were about to enter (*cf.* vi. 14). The nations were more powerful than Israel, but God would deliver them.

2. They must be destroyed, devoted to destruction as accursed, put under the ban. Lev. xxvii. 28. No covenant must be made, nor alliances formed with them lest their children should be seduced.

4. From following, *lit.* from behind me (Jehovah) *i.e.*, entice to other gods.

5. Deal. All appendages of idolatry to be destroyed. Ex. xxxiv. 13; xxiii. 24. Groves, enclosures of trees. Ashtoreth, a wooden pillar, very high and firmly fixed in the ground (*cf.* Jud. vi. 25-27; chap. xvi. 21), a female god (Ashtarte) companion of Baal.

6. Holy consecrated to God and not to be lost through idolatry. Special. *lit.* a people of property to God, 1 Chron. xxix. 8; Eccl. ii. 8; Tit. ii. 14. Above, out of all people.

7. This selection, not through numerical strength; but

8. Through the covenant of love (chap. iv. 37). This led to deliverance from Egypt.

9-12. By this Israel were to know that God was faithful in showing mercy to those that love Him and repaying, *i.e.*, punishing enemies to their face, *i.e.*, whilst still living; in their presence, in their own sight; or perhaps in their proper persons, Ex. xxxiii. 14.

11. This display of God's faithfulness should teach them to keep His statutes.

12. As a consequence of observance God's favour would be seen in blessing the fruit of the womb, increase of flocks and herds, *cf.* Ex. xxiii. 25.



15. In preservation from virulent sickness of all kinds (Ex. xv. 26) and especially all the evil diseases of Egypt.

16. Consume, *lit.*, devour as food, *snare*, *i.e.*, incentive to idolatry, Ps. cvi. 36.

17, 18. If they felt unable to meet with these powerful nations, they must remember Egypt, with its temptations, signs, and wonders (*cf.* chap. iv. 34; vi. 22). God would do the same to the Canaanites, and

20. Send hornets against them; for God was mighty and terrible to do this.

21, 22. Gradually would they be put out (*plucked off*), lest beasts should increase if dead bodies were left on the ground (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 29, 30).

24. To stand, *lit.*, to put oneself in the face of a person, to withstand, Lev. xiv. 43.

25, 26. Idols to be destroyed, gold and silver which overlaid them, to be burned. Snared, *cf.* Jud. viii. 27, lest they should fall under the curse, to which all idolatrous objects were devoted (Josh. vii).

### FORBIDDEN INTERCOURSE.—Verses 1-5.

Israel were about to possess Canaan, to go into danger and temptation. Moses forewarns them against toleration of idolatry. They must have no intercourse with these nations, be entirely separated from them, and by God's help utterly exterminate them.

I. No toleration of them. "Nor show mercy unto them." What we tolerate we begin to pity and love. Evils most repulsive at first become attractive afterwards. Hence we must avoid the very appearance of evil. In obedience to God, rid ourselves of every danger, though dear as a right hand or a right eye.

II. Entire separation from them. The command is stringent and oft repeated. 1. *In social intercourse.* "Thou shalt make no covenant with them," (ver. 2). *Treaties* were forbidden with Canaanites so gross in idolatry and infamous in custom and lust. *Marriages* were forbidden. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them." If a covenant was made with the people they would participate in idolatrous feasts, intermarry, join in worship, and be seduced into idolatry. The examples of Solomon and others in subsequent history prove the necessity and importance of this policy. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Life's dearest ties are to be regulated by God's will. We are to marry in the Lord. In character, custom and life, be "not conformed to this world." 2. *In religious worship.* They were not to bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works (Ex. xxiii. 24; xxxiv. 13). At first Israel were commanded to "quite break down their images;" then, after they had displayed idolatrous leanings they were to destroy "altars and groves," which would lead to the worship of the gods if retained. The entire apparatus of idol worship must be destroyed and forgotten (ver. 5).

III. Complete extermination of them. "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them." Nations, like individuals may become incorrigible and hopeless in their moral condition. Iniquities often call for Divine interposition. The Canaanites defiled the land with their abominations (Lev. xviii, 6, 23), and God as Sovereign Disposer employed what agency He pleased to dispossess them. Let us take warning, remove everything that offends God and perpetuates idolatry. "Pull down the nests, and the rooks will disappear" was the maxim of Knox. This is the wisest policy, the only security from God's anger. Drive from the heart, uproot and destroy in the world, every sinful custom; that the worship

of God may be established and every abomination stamped out, "lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee."

### DESIGN OF ISRAEL'S EXALTATION.—Verses 4-6.

They were to destroy the nations, because their existence, character and position were concerned. They were selected by God to be a holy and special people. This great honour and high privilege they were to keep and not cast away. Hence they were chosen and blessed with inheritance.

1. To preserve religious worship. "For they will turn away thy son from following Me." To preserve their national existence all corrupting influences must be put away; for "sin is a reproach (disgrace) to any people" (Prov. xiv, 34.) To keep their national faith, idolatry with all its monuments must be utterly exterminated. The land must be purged, every trace of impurity swept away, and the place consecrated to God and pure worship. Christians are called out of the world, to maintain conflict with its evils, to win and keep it for the habitation of God and His Spirit.

II. To maintain a special character. Israel was chosen to take a special place, to be "a peculiar people," historically and spiritually, among the nations of the earth. It was needful therefore to elevate and preserve them by moral law, wonderful providence, and special policy. 1. *As a holy people.* "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." Holy by special covenant, and should be holy in personal character and conduct, separation from the world involves watchful care and constant dedication to God. Israelites were to be near to God as priests of other nations thought themselves to be. Christians are entitled to draw nigh and offer to God their gifts and allegiance. "Ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of priests and a Holy nation (Ex. xix 6.) 2. *As special witnesses for God.* "A special people unto himself, for His glory, truth, and use." Their value was not in themselves, but in their position, virtues, and design. A nation is not to be estimated according to its wealth and ascendancy, but according to its moral worth and righteous deeds. What Israel was designed to be, Christians are now. "Ye are My witnesses saith the Lord," to testify to His existence, mercy, and purpose. "This people have I formed for Myself; they show forth My praise" (*virtues*) Is. xliii. 21; "the praises (*virtues*) of Him that hath so called you" (1 Peter ii. 9).

### THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.—Verses 6-8.

Moses is here referring to the ground or motive from which the election of Israel was originally made. Though it might have seemed suitable that the God of the universe should choose to Himself the mightiest nation of any, yet God had not so acted. He chose to Himself Israel, when as yet but a single family, or rather a single person, Abraham; though there were already numerous nations and powerful kingdoms in the earth.—*Sp. Com.*

I. The reason for the choice. God has always reasons, though not always assigned for what He does. They are given here negatively and positively. 1. *Not numerical strength.* "For ye were the fewest of all people." They were but a handful of people till after the death of Joseph. Nations of the East were great, and populations enormous; but God's choice depends not on size or appearance. 2. *Not moral worth.* They were no better than other people

though they prided themselves in virtue and calling, and were taught by rabbis that they were holy above all nations, they often pursued perverse and unworthy conduct. God derived no advantage from them. They were "a stiff-necked and rebellious people." Christians are not chosen on the ground of merit, foreseen repentance and faith, but "because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people." 3. *But from free grace.* (a) *Pure love.* He loved them because He would love them. A simple, foolish reason in the opinion of men. We love when there is something loveable in the person loved. Our love depends upon excitement without. God's love is free, sovereign, and in spite of everything unworthy. (b) *Divine faithfulness.* "He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers." God was a debtor to them on account of His promise, not through their conduct—a promise which He would perform, notwithstanding their sinfulness. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham."

II. *The manifestation of the choice.* The purpose was formed, the choice made, but had to be carried out and manifest in Israel's history. 1. *In their wonderful deliverance.* "From the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt." "Let my people go" was the demand. They could not serve God in Egyptian bondage. Only when they were free was it seen that they were God's inheritance and choice. 2. *In their holy character.* If holy, they were to evince it by holy life and make their calling and election sure by separation from idolatry and consecration to God. 3. *By hearty co-operation with God.* "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord" (ver. 6), therefore work with Him in destroying His enemies and fulfilling His purpose. God's purpose does not interfere with our responsibility, duty, and use of means.

III. *The design of the choice.* The motives which led to the election and redemption of Israel were beneficial to themselves and illustrative of God's wisdom and glory. They were chosen to be holy and could only fulfil their mission by obedience to God. External separation must lead to spiritual devotion. They were made the depositories of God's will. In their sacred rites and institutions, in their selection and history, God displayed His grace and prepared the world for His truth. "Neither the Egyptians, with all their wisdom," says *Tholuck*, "nor the imaginative Indians, nor the vain and speculative Greeks, nor the haughty Romans could have received a revelation, or have been employed in this work without marring it." "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

#### LESSONS FROM THE PAST.—Verses 8–11.

Israel were constantly reminded of the wonders of God in the past deeds to which they owed their national existence, and which were fitted as distinct manifestations of love to impress their minds and incite to obedience. Solemn are the lessons taught by their history. We may live in the past and not only discern the mind of the philosopher, historian, and politician, but the mind of God.

I. *The Grace of God to distinguish men.* Israel were distinguished and blessed above others by divine love. Privileges and personal gifts, honours and distinctions are to be traced to sovereign grace and not human merit. "For who maketh thee to differ (distinguisheth thee) (1 Cor. iv. 7) "By the grace of God I am what I am."



**II. The Power of God to deliver men.** "Redeemed you out of the house of bondmen." Israel were set free, guided and settled in the land, by a strong hand. This hand is not shortened, but delivers in sickness, dangers and trouble. No enemy, bondage, or chains, can retain God's people. "Who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver."

**III. The faithfulness of God to encourage men.** "Because he would keep the oath which he had sworn." God will never disregard or forget His word. The promise may be set at naught, fulfilment long delayed, and His people severely tried; but the oath is taken and will be verified. He is the God of Amen, and we may ever trust Him. His veracity is written in miracle, tender forbearance, and covenant mercy. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the Son of Man that He should repent" (Num. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29; 2 Tim. ii. 13.)

**IV. The providence of God to warn men.** Providence is the school of life in which we discern God and His purpose. Its relations to men are personal, and its lessons various. We have—1. *A lesson of mercy.* "He keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him." God's mercy infinitely transcends His righteous anger, and is shown to "a thousand generations." To enjoy this mercy we must love God and "keep his commandments." 2. *A lesson of justice.* "Repayeth them that hate Him." There is repayment or retribution in the government of God. The sinner cannot escape justice and sin go unpunished. This repayment is (a) *personal* "to his face." The sinner himself will see and feel that he is smitten of God (Job xxxiv. 11). "I am visited of God," cried a dying man. (b) *Open* "to his face," may mean openly, manifestly, discerned by others to warn them. (c) *Sudden.* "He will not be slack." Delay is not forgetfulness or winking at sin, but given to induce repentance. (d) *Severe* "to destroy." God's patience may be provoked, the day of grace may be lost, and vengeance may fall upon men suddenly, and that without remedy. 3. *A lesson of instruction.* "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments." If God thus deals with men, rewards them according to their works, take heed, be warned against rebellion and apostasy, and keep "His statutes." "Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

"For human weal, heaven husbands all events."—*Young.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1, 2. Gaining the inheritance.** 1. By Divine guidance. "The Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land." All inheritance, honour and position through God's blessing. 2. By earnest co-operation with God. Israel must follow, "thou goest;" must fight, "cast out." Then God would deliver them, and "they would utterly destroy them." We must work with God to enter any position and succeed in any pursuit.

**Vers. 2-5. Israel ministers of de-**  
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*struction.* 1. The people destroyed; an act which can only be reconciled with the Divine character, except on the assumption, that the gross idolatry and enormous wickedness of the Canaanites left no hope of repentance and amendment. 2. The monuments of idolatry destroyed. The Gods were deemed to be vanquished with the people whom they could no longer defend. There must be no rival with God in the human heart, in the Christian church, or in the world. All must be consecrated to Him.

**Vers. 4-6. Divine reasons for severity.** 1. Human wickedness, Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquity. 2. The good of His people. Preserving their existence, by keeping them from danger; maintaining their holy character and position by removing snares to evil.

**Vers. 6-8. A special people.** 1. In the impress of their character. "Thou art an holy people." 2. In the privileges which they possessed. "To whom pertaineth the adoption," etc. (Rom. ix. iv). 3. In the prodigies by which they were defended. What safeguards and helps from God?

**Ver. 9. The faithful God.** The God of Amen (Ps. xxxi. 6). "The

Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14) that "will not suffer His faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips" (Ps. lxxxix. 33), all His precepts, predictions, promises, menaces, being the issue of a most faithful and righteous will, void of the least insincerity or falsehood (1 Kings viii. 24). Neither could any day or age produce one instance to the contrary.—*Trapp.*

**Vers. 7-11. Important truths.** Election (ver. 7). Redemption (ver. 8). Grace (ver. 9). Justice (ver. 11). Law (ver. 11). *God revealed in deeds.* Deeds of wonder (ver. 8). Deeds of love (ver. 7). Deeds of faithfulness and mercy (ver. 9), and deeds of righteousness (ver. 10).

### THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE.—Verses 12-16.

As there was retribution for disobedience, so there would be rewards for obedience. Israel was God's servant, and must render to their Ruler His just rights. "If ye hearken to these judgments." If they would observe and keep them, great would be their prosperity, temporally and spiritually.

**I. The source of these blessings.** "He will love thee and bless thee." Love is first, and love is last. God begins in love to us, and we should return love and obedience to Him (1 John iv. 10; John xiv. 21.). In mercy "He sware unto thy fathers," and in mercy he kept the oath. Change is impossible with Him, and fail He never can. History testifies to God's love. His purpose to bless in Christ, like a thread of gold, runs through all ages.

**II. The extent of these blessings.** Prosperity would abound in all departments of personal, domestic, and religious life. 1. *Temporal prosperity would be abundant.* This is an object of legitimate desire, and held out as the promise of loyal obedience. (a) *Freedom from personal sickness.* "The Lord will take away from thee all sickness" (ver. 15). Sickness often results from sin, and might be overcome or prevented by a sober, godly life. Plagues and pestilence are Divine scourges for neglect of natural and spiritual laws. If Israel would walk in God's ways, He would miraculously preserve them. The special "diseases of Egypt," which, notwithstanding its even temperature and mildness, are indigenous and malignant, would not touch them. Let us thank God for healthy climate, but remember that only regard for physical and moral law will give health and happiness. (b) *Increase of womb.* "He will also bless the fruit of thy womb" (ver. 13). God would remember His promise to multiply them as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. (c) *Increase of cattle* (ver. 13). Nothing should be barren among them (ver. 14). Abortions, untimely births and barrenness in excess were considered signs of God's anger, and special sacrifices were offered to prevent them. (d) *Increase of fruit.* Land would yield its increase. Corn and wine would be plentiful (cf. Lev. xxvi. 3-5, 9, 10; Ex. xxiii. 25, 26; Ps. cvii. 38). 2. *Spiritual prosperity would be great.* "Thou shalt be

blessed above all people" (ver. 14). The mercy of ver. 12 means special favour. Whatever results from natural laws is bestowed by the Lawgiver. The blessings of bodily health, family increase, fruitful lands, and productive flocks, are modes of displaying God's goodness, and should prompt to faithful service. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

III. The conditions on which these blessings are given. "If ye hearken to these judgments" (ver. 12). What a frail, feeble, and uncertain condition! some would say. But such are the terms of an all-wise God. He is faithful—can we be? Not of ourselves, only by his grace and good spirit. If Canaan had depended on the merit and valour of Israel, they could not have entered it. They obeyed God and gained the land. We cannot secure heaven and Divine favour, only by faith in Christ and obedience to His word. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

### ENCOURAGEMENT IN DUTY.—*Verses 16-21.*

With the thought that Israel would be strong and vigorous, by obedience to God, "Moses reverts with emphasis to the command to root out the Canaanites without reserve, and not to serve their gods, because they would be a snare to them (*cf.* Ex. x. 7); and then in vers. 17-26 he carries out still further the promise in Ex. xxiii. 27-30, of the successful subjugation of the people through the assistance of the Lord, and sweeps away all the objections that a weak faith might raise to the execution of the divine command."—*Keil*.

I. The enforcement of duty. "Thou shalt consume all the people," ver. 16. They were utterly to extirpate them from the land, without the least pity for their persons or regard to their religion. We are not to consult our feelings but our duty; not to wait for more knowledge but to act on what we have. "To wait for God's performance," says Bishop Hall, "and do nothing, is to abuse that Divine Providence which will always so work as not to allow us to remain in activity."

II. Fear in undertaking duty. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them (ver. 18). When God commands we hesitate, excuse or delay. "Sloth in conclusion proves laborious," says Bacon. Fear springs.—1. *From overpowering numbers.* "These nations are more than I." Seven nations to supplant. "How can I dispossess them?" When we look at self and forget God we magnify dangers. "The soldier wastes his strength who fights with shadows." "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." 2. *From weakness of heart.* "If thou say in thine heart." If the heart gives way, all strength is gone physically and spiritually. Weapons and numbers avail not without heart. If we forget God we shall lose courage and be afraid. "I will send a faintness into their hearts, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. xxvi. 27-36.) 3. *From lack of faith in God.* God will help and maintain the right; why fear?" Trust in Him, and His strength becomes yours. "All things are possible to him that believes."

"Our doubts are traitors;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it."—*Shakespeare*.

III. Reasons for encouragement in the performance of duty. The Bible seeks to impress the minds of God's people most strongly with a sense of boldness, faith and courage. God prepares them for meeting and overcoming



anticipated evils. Many are the motives to drive away fear. 1. *The exploits of God in the past.* Remember, and “well remember, what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh” (ver. 18). The sublime deeds of Jehovah, the grandeurs of history must never, whatever else may be forgotten. What God has done he can do again. He can never change. Omnipotence is never exhausted. It is no strange thing for God to do wonders. He has always done them, hence ground for confidence. “So shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.” 2. *The help of God in the present.* “The Lord thy God is among you.” Faith can discover an invisible helper more than a match for all against us. “How many do you count me to be?” said an ancient general to his soldiers, despondingly asking, “How many are coming against us?” “A mighty God and terrible.” 3. *The providence of God in their favour.* Napoleon said providence was with the strongest battalion, but “God and one man are in the majority” very often. Israel were the fewest, yet had to destroy the strongest peoples. (a.) *God would be for Israel, but against their foes* (ver. 15). Not one could stand their onslaught. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.” (b.) *The hornet was their ally.* “Thy God will send the hornet among them” (ver. 20), God musters many forces for his work. Locusts, flies, and hornets, are no insignificant helpers in the ranks of Jehovah. Insects have swarmed and swept mighty armies before them. Thus does God encourage. Wonders in the past and promises for the present; creatures great and little prove divine power to conquer. This energy the Gospel contains to-day. Banish guilty fears, sloth and forgetfulness of God. “Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.”

### THE ALMIGHTY HELPER.—Verse 21.

This description of God is a terror to sinners, but an encouragement to Christians. His mighty presence is—1. *Unmerited.* The aid we get from earthly friends is often a reciprocity of kindness—a discharge of obligation. But our goodness extends not to God. We have done nothing to deserve help. 2. *Unexpected.* In most extreme danger and when most unlikely, comes deliverance. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” The place of fear and sorrow, becomes one of joy and triumph. 3. *Singular.* God’s methods are peculiar to himself. Events which appear to combine to work our ruin, bring our salvation. In the deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan God was terrible to his enemies. 4. *Timely.* We think He has forgotten or forsaken us if He appears not when we wish. But He knows better than we do when it is time for Him to work. “Too late,” can never be said of His mercy. “A very present help in trouble.” 5. *All-sufficient.* Earthly friends fail. God is always among us, “a mighty God and terrible.” He conquers most formidable foes, rescues from the greatest dangers.” “The Lord your God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible.”

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 12.** 1. *The command.* Judgments possessed, heard, and kept. The word must be known and practised. “If a scholar have his rules laid before him, and he forget them as fast as he read them, he will never

learn,” says T. Watson. 2. *The promise.* “If” we do our part God will do His. Blessings seem to be suspended on our obedience. “Prove me herewith.”

Ver. 13. *Triple blessings.* "Love thee, bless thee, and multiply thee."

Vers. 13, 14. *Religion and Material Prosperity.* 1. An indication of its nature (Matt. vi. 33 ; 1 Tim. iv. 8.) 2. An argument for its reception (Deut. xxviii. 5-8.) 3. A proof of wisdom and goodness in its author.

Ver. 16. *Extirpation.* 1. Commanded and can be done. 2. Needful and must be done, to secure their own safety, religion, and the favour of God. 3. If left undone, "that will be a snare to thee."

Vers. 17-19. *Anticipated fears.* 1. *Natural.* How apt to meet troubles before they come ! What shall I do ? "How can I get through ?" and "what will become of me ?" are common questions. 2. *Weakening.* Nothing more disheartens than looking within ourselves, and measuring God by ourselves. "Wonderful is the case of boldness in civil business. What first ? boldness. What second and third ? boldness" (*Bacon*). 3. *Groundless.* "God sometimes seems to say to us," says Cecil, "if within and without, you have ever so much cause for despondency, yet do not limit *Me*." "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

Vers. 18, 19. *Remember.* A good memory is very helpful and useful. 1. It is a great means of *knowledge*, for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing. 2. It is a means of *faith* (1 Cor. xv. 2.) 3. It is a means of *comfort*. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life ; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. 4. It is a means of *thankfulness*. 5. It is a means of *hope* ; for "experience worketh hope" (Rom. v. 4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience. 6. It is a means of *repentance* ; for how can we repent or mourn for what we have forgotten ? 7. It is a means of *usefulness*. When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also.—*R. Steele*.

Ver. 21. *Thy God.* Jehovah, maker of worlds, but *the God* only of His people. Thy God by purpose, covenant, promise, and performance. *Among you* the centre of all knowledge, trust, devotion and help. He sees and sustains, defends and comforts. Let us extol his power by which He works deliverance ! "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty." *God's presence and power.* 1. A source of hope in fear. 2. Of help in weakness. 3. Of guidance in perplexity. 4. Of triumph in conflict.

### THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.—Verses 16-24.

The land was to be taken and the kings utterly destroyed. But the specific aid and the specific method are described—

I. The conquest was most difficult. So difficult that Israel thought they could not accomplish it. They were few, their enemies many ; they were strangers to the country ; the Canaanites knew every field of it ; they were unskilled in the art and without much experience in the practice of war. "These nations are mightier than I ; how can I dispossess them ?" *We* cannot, but God never sends us on warfare at our own charge. To be valourous soldiers we must banish distrust.

II. The conquest was supernaturally gained. God had helped them in every case and thus far brought them safely. He could yet display all mighty power and work "signs and wonders." His presence and providence are with us, if we only obey and work with Him. Thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction (ver. 23).

**III. The conquest was gradual.** "Little by little; thou mayest not consume them at once." 1. *This was an evidence of kindness to Israel.* Wild animals might increase too much if the land was suddenly depopulated and become a source of danger and trouble to Israel "lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." 2. *This is a law of Divine grace.* "Little by little" do we conquer sin and self, the world and its temptations. Little by little do we gain men for Christ and succeed in Christian effort. 3. *This is a law of God's providence.* Great undertakings demand patient thought; are frequently interrupted and only succeed by gradual progress and successive order. Thus does God teach "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

### GOD'S PEOPLE INVINCIBLE.—Verses 23, 24.

God had shown that Israel had no need to be afraid. He would help by His presence, power, and providence, until all left and hidden would be destroyed. To inspire them with courage, the promise is repeated and success is pledged. If they will only obey they will conquer. God's people are invincible.

**I. On account of the warfare in which they are engaged.** Israel's mission seemed cruel, but it was the cause of God and for the welfare of humanity. "A good cause gives a stout heart." Christian warfare is a Divine cause. "Fight the good fight of faith."

"Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful."—*Shakespeare.*

**II. On account of the enthusiasm which inspires them.** "There shall no man be able to stand before thee." Cromwell's Ironsides fought for liberty, truth, and God. God would inspire His people with wonderful courage, so that they would not only pursue but overcome. A handful would be more than a match for a regiment. Five of you shall chase an hundred," etc. (Lev. xxvii. 7, 8.)

**III. On account of the leader who commands them.** Great generals make good soldiers. Cæsar often restored his rebellious army to obedience, made them attached to his person and devoted to his cause. Christ, "the Captain of our salvation" is merciful, mighty and victorious, never lost, and never will lose a battle. "If God be for us who can be against us" (Rom. viii. 31, 37; Isa. xli, 11).

### THE CURSED THING.—Verses 25, 26.

The idols of Canaan were devoted to destruction, under the curse of God and if preserved they might entice to sins, therefore Israel were to destroy them by fire with their ornaments and supports.

**I. Idolatry is a cursed thing.** The worship of gods and the worship of gold; all superstitions and sins are abominable things which the Lord hates.

**II. This cursed thing may become a snare.** "Lest thou be snared therein." 1. *By gratifying covetousness.* "Thou shalt not desire the silver or the gold that is on them." God may be served from motives of gain. Gold and silver may tempt and covetous lusts may endanger the soul. 2. *By transforming character like itself.* Man becomes like the object he loves. The love of the world will



make us worldly; the love of money will make us avaricious. Sin in its gilded and attractive forms must be utterly detested, for loving begets likeness. 3. *By bringing under the curse of God.* Achan "took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. vii. 1-21; vi. 17, 18; Jud. viii. 27.) We cannot use for our good what God has put under anathema.

III. This snare it is our duty to remove. "Thou shalt utterly abhor it." We are to hate what God hates and forsake what he forbids. 1. We are not to desire but to detest it. 2. Not to bring it into the house but burn it in the fire. Thus are we not only to oppose, but detest and destroy all idolatry and wickedness. The worship of man or reason, of art or mammon must find no place in our hearts and homes. We must avoid the very appearance of evil. Our service must be disinterested and holy. "There shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 23, 24. *Great reverses predicted.* Delivered. Destroyed with a mighty destruction. *Kings* destroyed. Destruction severe and universal. *Name* destroyed. "Thou mayest choose," says Bishop Pilkington, "whether thou wilt be remembered to thy praise or to thy shame." "The name of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. x. 7).

Ver. 25. *Snared.* As the fowler catcheth birds, and the hunter wild beasts in their snares and traps, so shall these Canaanites catch you by their familiarity and commerce, and draw you to participate in their sins and plagues.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 25, 26. Images burned, and nothing kept. 1. To satisfy curiosity. 2. To excite pity. 3. To gratify lust. 4. To lead astray.

*Idol gods.* Made (images graven), adorned (gold and silver on them), upheld (in the house), cursed and uprooted. *Feeling towards them.* Utterly detest—utterly abhor—destroy and burn. Learn—1. That God will not accept divided worship. 2. That in mixing with the world we are in danger of being estranged from God. 3. That when estranged from God, and brought under his curse, the punishment will be severe.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1-5. *No covenant with them.* Court not the society of worldly persons, but "come out from among them and be separate." If duty calls us there, be with them as physicians, not companions; as monitors, not friends; walk as among snares, and as Cecil advises, "transact business with them like a person in a shower of rain, staying no longer than is indispensably necessary."

Vers. 6-8. *Chosen thee.* That separation from other nations in which the holiness of the Jewish nation

chiefly consisted (Ex. xix. 5, 6; Num. xxiii. 9; Deut. xxvi. 18, 19) was not spiritual, resulting from rectitude of heart and a correspondent deportment, but merely external, derived from certain sacred rites and ceremonies, different from or opposite to those from other nations. The glory of the Divine wisdom, no less than of Divine goodness and grace, was manifested in the choice of the Israelites for the important purposes contemplated by their separation. (*Jamieson*). Judaism was amongst the idolatrous nations of antiquity like a

**oasis in a desert**, clearly defined and isolated; separated and enclosed by a rigid moral and ceremonial law.—*Schaff*.

**Vers. 8-11. Covenant and mercy.** The Jewish scheme proceeded on exactly the same principles as the general system of Divine government over the world, with this difference; that the Supreme Jehovah, the Immediate Sovereign as well as tutelary God of the Hebrew nation, undertook to dispense this as well as every other species of reward and punishment, by an immediate and extraordinary provision, in which justice should be tempered with abundant *mercy*, confining the providential and temporal punishment for the parent's crimes (as in the captivity) to the *third and fourth* generation; while it encouraged virtue and piety, by the assurance of a *reward*, similar in kind, but infinitely superior in degree, and which under the common course of events could not be hoped for; promising to extend the blessings of parental faith and obedience (as in the case of Abraham), to the *thousandth* generation of those who loved God.—*Graves on Pent*).

**Vers. 12-16. Bless thee.** Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the new (*Bacon*). In the day of good be thou in good. When God gives thee *prosperity*, do thou enjoy it with a cheerful and thankful heart (*Bp. Reynolds*). God's blessing upon our hearts, families and churches.

"My stock lies dead, and no increase  
Doth my dull husbandry improve;  
O let thy graces without cease  
Drop from above."

*From Spurgeon.*

**Ver. 17-22. Afraid.** Ills that never happened have mostly made men wretched, (*Tupper*.) 1. Most of our difficulties arise from discussing what belongs to God. 2. God does not

reason with us, but replies to our suspicions reasoning by displaying anew the love of His heart and the power of His arm, (*Bonar*).

**Ver. 21. With thee.** When the Crusaders encamped before Jerusalem, a terrible struggle ensued. The Saracens possessed the city, bore down upon them in countless numbers, and it seem as if the Christian army would lose the battle. All at once, we are told that a joyful cry rang through the ranks of the crusaders. "St. James is with us! He fights on our side." "In the excitement of the conflict, some of them fancied they saw the apostle in the clouds advancing to help them. It gave them new courage. They rushed forward with energy which could not be withstood and the battle was won.

**Ver. 22. Little and little.** Birds build nests straw by straw. "Euripides the Greek tragedian, was very slow in composing his excellent dramas. One day a poetaster met him and began to rally him on his tardiness, adding that he himself had written 100 verses in three days, while Euripides had only written three. "Ah (said Euripides) but there is this difference, your 300 verses perish in three days, while my three will survive 300 years." (*Brewer*.)

**Vers. 23-24. No man able to stand before thee.** Luther's song of confidence. "God is our refuge and strength." Let God be thy love and thy fear, and He will be also thy refuge. "The firmest thing in this lower world is a believing soul." (*Leighton*). When Luther was going into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, to answer for his heretical opinions, one of the Cardinal's underlings, insultingly asked him where he would find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him? "Under the shield of heaven," was the bold reply.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—In addition to the danger of being ensnared by idolatry, after their settlement in Canaan, Israel might fall into pride and forget God in the enjoyment of its products. To guard against this, Moses reviews the past and indicates the Divine purpose in the 40 years' wanderings.

1. Renewed admonition to keep the law.

2. Remember that God's designs may be realised and right effects produced (chap. xiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31). *Humble*, i.e., to bring them by means of distress and privations to depend upon God. *Prove*, i.e., to test in positions which would reveal their thoughts and hearts.

3. *Manna* (Ex. xvi. 14, 15), previously unknown to them and their fathers; not only to sustain natural life, but to show that man lives not by *bread* only, but by *every word*, *lit.*, every outgoing of the mouth of the Lord; not by material bread, but by the fulfilment of God's will (cf. Mat. iv. 4). God sustains life by extraordinary as well as ordinary means.

4. God provided for clothing as well as nourishment. *Waxed*, *lit.*, did not fall off, waste away, *foot swell*, become soft (chap. lxx., got callous; Neh. ix. 21), which would have been the case if their sandals had not been preserved from wearing out.

5. Thus did God chasten, *lit.*, admonish, educate them as a father his son.

7-9. Israel were to be mindful of this paternal discipline when they entered the good land. We have a contrast between Palestine and Egypt. *Brooks*, streams, mountain torrents, and water-courses in valleys; water the chief source of fertility. *Wheat*, cereal fruits specially promised to faithful allegiance (Ps. lxxxi. 16; cxvii. 14). *Vines* covering limestone rocks. *Honey*, a great delicacy.

9. *Stones are iron*, i.e., ferruginous. *Brass*, not the alloy brass, but the ore of copper. Mines now exhausted or neglected were worked anciently (Job. xxviii. 1-11; Is. lx. 17; 1 Chron. xxii. 3).

10-18. Israel in the midst of plenty were to beware of forgetting God.

12. *Goodly houses* would be strange after moveable tents.

14. *Lifted up*, like the Pharisee in the temple.

In vers. 14-16 Moses again gives a summary of the dangers of the desert; snakes, scorpions, and drought. Yet Divine goodness brought water out of the hardest stone, and gave manna to humble them, and ultimately to do good at *latter end*, i.e. the settlement of Israel in Canaan—the end and climax of the Mosaic dispensation, to which the sojourn in Egypt, the wandering in the desert, and the arrangements of the law, all led up (*Speak. Com.*).

18. *Wealth*. God gave power to get wealth, to create property (Numb. xxiv. 18), not on account of Israel's merit, but to fulfil His promise *this day*; the oath was confirmed, and Israel had come through the desert to the border of Canaan.

19, 20. To strengthen his admonition, Moses pointed again in conclusion, as in chap. vi. 14 (cf. chap. iv. 25 sqq.), to the destruction which would come upon Israel through *ostacy* from God (*Keil*.)

## THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE.—Verses 1-6.

The long wandering in the wilderness was designed to teach self-distrust, humility and reliance on God for the necessities of life. God's special providence had blessed them, and without this they could not prosper in Canaan. Hence they are urged to remember the experience of the past to secure obedience in the future.



REMEMBERING THE WAY.—*Verse 2.*

**I. The way we are called to remember** is “*all the way*,” etc. But those things are to be most remembered which are more immediately connected with heaven, as—1. The means which brought us into the way : 2. The afflictions with which we have been visited since we have been walking in the path of life : 3. Our mercies : 4. Our sins.

**II. To be beneficial the remembrance** must be accompanied by a lively conviction of the overruling providences of God in all that has happened to us. 1. They are intended to humble us : 2. To prove us : 3. To teach the insufficiency of earthly things to make us happy.

**III. Besides these immediate ends they answer**—1. To confirm our faith in the Bible : 2. To increase our knowledge of ourselves : 3. To strengthen our confidence in God.—*C. Bradley.*

THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE.—*Verses 1-6.*

**1. Life is a journey.** “All the way.” It is a most solemn and eventful way. (We are strangers and pilgrims on earth as our fathers were.) “You have not passed this way before.” 1. *Under Divine guidance.* “The Lord thy God led thee.” Moses and Aaron, priests and counsellors, were with Israel, but they prayed “let thy presence go with us” (Ex xxxiii. 14, 17). Many looked upon Moses alone, God’s guidance was needful. The Christian has a divine and omnipotent leader. “So I am with you,” Sad for those who journey without God. 2. *Displaying divine goodness.* From beginning to end life is filled with tokens of divine favours. (a) *In redeeming it from destruction* as Israel were delivered from Egypt. Dangers seen and unseen, enemies in every period and stage—perils, personal, social, and peculiar, have been overcome. (b) *In sustaining it in time of need.* Food, clothing, and shelter have been given. Manna never ceased ; supplies came every day. Decay made no progress, and God provided for every emergency. “God will pay all our expenses to heaven,” says an old writer. 3. *Under divine discipline.* “To prove thee.” Hardships, trials, and changes, are ways by which God discovers what is in our hearts. The bitter and sweet are mixed together in heavenly discipline, give life a moral value and test faith, disposition and character. 4. *Directed to a special end.* There is *direction*, dark and perplexing as events may be. We train and educate our children for ultimate ends. God disciplines his people for special work, special enjoyment, and “good at the latter end.” The moral end to prove us, and the real end eternal rest.

**II. The journey of life should be remembered.** “Thou shalt remember all the way.” Life’s meaning can only be understood by its retrospect and remembrance. We cannot discern God’s purpose in the midst of its movement and events. But when raised to some mount, or brought to some crisis, then we calmly review the past and learn its lessons. 1. *In its marked duration.* “These forty years” in the wilderness. Long or short our days are limited. The longest life brief regarded in the light of eternity. Brief contrasted with the age of the world and the duration of God ! But filled with human folly and divine mercy ! 2. *In its special dangers.* “In the wilderness,” a land of dearth, scorpions and fiery serpents, verse 15. “A land of deserts and of pits ; through a land of drought and of the shadow of death ; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt” (Jer. ii. 6 ; Hos. xiii. 5). 3. *In its peculiar trials.* The Red Sea with its triumphs, Marah with its bitterness,

Rephidim with its murmurs, Sinai with its thunders and the wilderness with its supplies, contests and incidents must never be forgotten. The past records, the wonders of God ; memory must treasure them up to aid faith. "Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries."—(*Spurgeon.*) 4. *In its moral nature.* Life is more than meat which sustains it, greater than natural existence. Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word, the will of God or what is pleasing to God. God sustained Israel forty years with manna, and Moses forty days and forty nights without bread to show that our well-being depends not upon material things. Our life is nourished by God's will, we should therefore be more anxious to do that will, than become impatient, fretful, and selfish in helping ourselves (*cf.* Matt. iv. 4 ; John vi. 52-55).

**III. The habit of remembering life will be helpful to us.** As an exercise of memory it is useful. Memory may help or hinder according to our tastes and moral condition. We should review the past. 1. *To acquaint us with ourselves.* "Know thyself" is a difficult lesson. We blame the Jews and are guilty ourselves. We measure ourselves with ourselves or others, and think too highly of ourselves. But God knows what is in man, puts us into circumstances which test our character, and which bring out what we have in us, what we have in our hearts, "whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." 2. *To teach us dependence upon God.* "To humble thee," and uproot all pride and self-sufficiency. "He suffered thee to hunger," that God might be recognised and trusted. What could Israel, what can we do in the wilderness without God. Supplies came not from earth but from heaven. 3. *To excite gratitude to God.* Gratitude cures bad memories. If we forget God's works we have need to learn the art of remembering. "Eaten bread is soon forgotten. Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour" (*Trapp*). Memory quickens the heart and supplies fuel to grateful feeling. 4. *To prompt obedience to God.* "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments," etc. (ver. 6). Without a sense of obligation there can be no real obedience. "Those who forget God's works," says Spurgeon, "are sure to fail in their own." "Thanksgiving is good," observes Matthew Henry, "but thanksgiving is better." We should make grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness by unreserved dedication to His service. "All the commandments shall ye observe to do."

#### DIVINE DISCIPLINE.—Verses 5-6.

The sufferings of Israel were not only chastisements for sin, but trials of obedience ; methods of discovering their unbelief, inconstancy and rebellion. Thus God trained or disciplined them, that they might obey Him.

**I. The nature of this discipline.** In earthly families there must be correction, "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not !" Among God's people there is "a needs be" for this discipline. 1. *It is often severe.* "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Some are heavily afflicted. They suffer in body and mind, in family and business. Dark, indeed are their days, most intense are the flames in which they are put, until their "flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen" (Job xxxiii. 21 ; xiv. 22. 2. *It is always affectionate.* "As a man chasteneth his son"—God never suffers His children to be ruined for want of correction ; whom He loves He chastens, and chastens because He loves. "He rejoiceth over His child to do Him good" (Jer. xxxii. 41). Not as a master beating his slaves, nor a judge condemning criminals ;



"God deals with His servants," says an old writer, "not as a passionate master, but as a compassionate father." The principle which prompts him is not judicial nor retributive, but parental. Hence cried Luther, "Strike on, Lord, strike on, for now I know I am Thy child."

**II. The design of this discipline.** God has a purpose in view. His strokes are not random strokes. Earthly fathers chastise foolishly, often for their own pleasure and err in their method of discipline (Heb. xii. 5, 6.) "They err at one time in severity, at another in indulgence (1 Sam. iii. 12; Ep. vi. 4), and do not so much chasten as *think* they chasten" (Bengel.) But God trains for our well-being and never errs in the means to accomplish it. 1. *To give instruction.* "Consider in thine heart." Afflictions are not to be despised, but thought of and felt. Seneca could say "it is inhuman not to feel thine afflictions, and unmanly not to bear them." In this school we are taught the folly of pride, the need of purity and the mercy of God. It throws light into our character and leads to moral decision. God "taught the men of Succoth (made them to know) with 'thorns of the wilderness and briars'" (Jud. viii. 16). We are made to know much of sin, of Christ, of God, and of the world, through affliction. Luther said there were many of the Psalms that he could never understand till he had been afflicted. Rutherford declared that he had gained a new Bible through the furnace. 2. *To produce obedience.* "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments." Children are wayward, self-willed, and must be preserved from disobedience. Jesus had to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered." "Sufferings, disciplinings" (trainings) is the Greek adage. God melts in the furnace that he may stamp with His image; corrects that we may partake of His holiness. The rod is sent to wean from sin, train to obedience and discipline for heaven. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law."

"Among the choicest of my blessings here,  
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 1. I. Duty to be rightly performed.** 1. Right in its *method*. "Observe to do." 2. Right in its *motive*. From the fear of God. 3. Right in its *scope*. "All the commandments." **II. Duty rightly performed brings enjoyment.** Physical exercise gives health, vigour, and pleasure. Obedience to God gives satisfaction of heart and mind. Israel would (a) live, (b) multiply, and (c) gain the inheritance. "Employment is true enjoyment," says Shakespeare.

*All the commandments.* "All" is but a little word, but of large extent. There are *magnalia legis* and *minutula legis*. Look to both the greater and the lesser things of the law (Matt. xxiii. 23).—*Trapp*.

yourselves thoroughly—store memory wisely—live obediently. *Remembrance of God's commandments.* Consider: I. The duty of remembrance. A positive duty, an obligation upon us, with regard to—1. Earthly things; 2. Heavenly things. II. The benefit resulting from it. These events, which we should remember, were intended to—1. Humble us; 2. Prove us. III. Its comfort: it is all "to do thee good at thy latter end" (J. J. Day, M.A.). *The Retrospect.* I. Let us return to the call to remembrance. II. Observe the subject to be reviewed. 1. The place: "the wilderness;" 2. The Conductor: "the Lord thy God;" 3. The passages: "all the way;" 4. The period: "these forty years."—*Jay*.

**Vers. 2-4. Practical religion.** Know

**Vers. 5, 6. Chasteneth.** This is



reckoned here as an high favour. So Job accounts it (chap. vii. 17, 18), and Paul describes it (Heb. xii. 7, 8), and Jeremiah prays for it (chap. x. 24).—*Trapp.*

*Divine chastisement.* Afflictions are—1. Divine in their appointment. 2. Paternal in their character. Inflicted with tender reluctance, deliberate wis-

dom, and with great leniency. 3. Painful in their exercise. 4. Affectionate in their design.

"He nothing does, or suffers to be done, But thou would'st do thyself, could'st thou but see,

The end of all events as well as he."

*Rev. R. Bond.*

### THE GOOD LAND.—*Verses 7-9.*

It is significant that Deuteronomy should abound more than earlier books in praises of the beauty and fertility of Canaan. "Such a topic," says Dean Graves, "at an earlier period would have increased the murmurings and impatience of the people at being detained in the wilderness; whereas now it encouraged them to encounter with more cheerfulness the opposition they must meet with from the inhabitants of Canaan."

**I. A good land displaying Divine bounties.** Ancient and modern writers testify to the natural beauty and fertility of Palestine. Most striking features are mentioned first. Water abounds in natural springs, fountains, and in the clouds of heaven. Its cereal fruits yielded sixty and often an hundred fold (Gen. xxvi. 12; Matt. xiii. 8), and under its hills iron and brass were found. It was a land of plenty and rich variety; displaying Divine goodness in its produce and position "a wealthy place" (Ps. lxxvi. 12). What forethought, wisdom, and affection God displays in causing the earth to furnish us with the necessities of life! Everything to satisfy the eye, promote health, and gratify the taste. But this possession is only a type of spiritual blessings, and a richer inheritance in the land beyond.

**II. A good land in contrast to the wilderness.** Compared with Egypt from whence they came, and with the desert through which they passed, the land was remarkable. Contrasts in life are many and striking—in its different stages, in its beginning and end. Deserts and fruitful fields, poverty and wealth, light and darkness, "are set the one over against the other," in Divine appointment, wise proportion and benevolent design. "To the end that man should find nothing after him." Nothing superfluous, defective, or irregular in the review (Ecc. vii. 14). "If a man should take upon himself to review the work after him, and conceive that a greater or less degree of prosperity or adversity would have been better, or that either would have sufficed, without the balance of the other—he only stands before us in all the folly and presumption of fancying himself to be wiser than God. What God has done, he has done best."—*Bridge.*

**III. A good land for which Israel was prepared.** There was, not only a natural preparation in the physical changes and human cultivation of Canaan, but a moral preparation of the people for their position. The earth is prepared for man, and the world to be the theatre of redemption; but man is trained and disciplined for his inheritance. We are not always fit to receive the things we cry for. Blessings would never be appreciated without a sense of need and adaptation. The wealth of the soul is the wealth of experience; faith confirmed after trial and deliverance. The place of the believer is gained through humility, affliction and discipline, and men are always trained and prepared for their lot in life. Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." "To bring thee into the place which I have prepared."

THE PERILS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 10-18.*

When Israel entered the good land it would be one of the greatest changes in their history. In the midst of plenty they might forget God, who sustained them in the wilderness, brought them into their possession and lavished his gifts upon them. "Beware thou forget not the Lord thy God."

**I. Prosperity leads to self-indulgence.** "When thou hast eaten and art full." Wealth leads to surfeiting. In abundance men indulge sinful appetites. "Eating and drinking are themselves religious acts, or, at least, *ought* to be so," says Feuerback, "with every mouthful we should think of the God who gave it." God gives bread for necessities, man craves "meat for his lust." (Ps. lxxviii. 18.) Self-indulgence is dangerous as "a knife to thy throat," (Prov. xxiii. 2) and must be avoided lest ruin ensue. "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

**II. Prosperity tends to forgetfulness of God.** Forgetfulness of His providence, gifts and commandments. A sense of divine favours dies in the memory. The mercy of God is only remembered when it is taken away. In the order of nature and in the events of life, God is forgotten, and self or second causes are praised. "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." (Hos. ii. 8.)

**III. Prosperity begets pride of heart.** "Then thine heart be lifted up." Adversity may depress, but prosperity elevates to presumption. It lifts up the mind against God. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Herod are fearful examples. It is not mere aversion from God, but direct resistance to God, against which God places himself in battle array; "God *resisteth* the proud." (James iv. 6.) "They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." (Hos. xiii. 6.)

**IV. Prosperity genders self-glorification.** "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." (ver. 17.) Proud men esteem themselves too highly, demand reverence from their fellow men, and glorify themselves instead of God. Nebuchadnezzar ascribed all the praise to himself in his prosperity. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," etc. (Dan. iv. 30-32). It is false, unreasonable, and mischievous to say that we gain our wealth and positions. Do not sacrifice to your own nets (Hab. i. 16), "for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." (ver. 18.)

"In pride, in reasoning pride our error lies;  
All quit the sphere, and rush into the skies.  
Pride still is aiming at the blessed abodes;  
Men would be angels, angels would be Gods."—*Pope*.

ARGUMENTS FOR OBEDIENCE.—*Verses 14-18.*

God's purpose was to do Israel good at the latter end. There was no event in their journey separate and independent in itself. There was divine issue in everything. The end in view was to make them humble and obedient. Hence Moses enforces his lesson by a recapitulation of mercies and points out the danger of disobedience.

**I. The past mercies of God should lead to present obedience (ver. 15.)** These are again specified, and should never be forgotten. Deliverance from bondage ; guidance and preservation in danger, want and distress ; bountiful supplies and careful training. Our life wonderfully displays power, mercy, and grace ; and its review should beget profound sense of gratitude and prompt to consecration. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

**II. Our dependence upon God should lead to present obedience.** God gives power to get wealth and gain success in life (ver. 18.) Israel were perfectly helpless from beginning to end of their history. Supplies in the wilderness came from heaven. "The good land" was a special gift. We can never cease to be dependent upon God, and should, therefore, not attribute prosperity to "the laws of nature," or to our own skill and wisdom. We should seek to please and obey God. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it."

**III. Future destiny should lead to present obedience.** Moses often puts the condition of blessings upon their obedience. In some respect their future was in their own hands. Apostacy would lead to ruin. As God had destroyed "the nations before their face," so they would perish if they "would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord." Loyal obedience would secure length of days, and national glory. Our eternal weal or woe depends upon our conduct and character here. "As all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you ; so shall the Lord bring upon you all the evil things," etc. (Jos. xxiii. 15.)

#### A CAUTION AGAINST FORGETFULNESS OF GOD.—Verse 11.

The text, though delivered by Moses thousands of years ago, is addressed to us now ; it contains an *assumption*, an *intimation*, and a *charge*.

**I. Men are liable to forget God.** This is assumed in the text, and needs but little confirmation. All acknowledge it, but to impress it deeply upon our minds, notice the following considerations :—1. *We infer our liability to forget from the mysteriousness of His nature.* Things near that we handle and see are not easily forgotten ; but things remote, unseen and mysterious, are not generally remembered. No man hath seen God ; our ideas of Him are imperfect, and hence we are liable to forget Him. 2. *We infer our liability to forget God from the moral dislike we have to Him.* We easily remember those to whom we are deeply attached, but forget those whom we dislike. Sinners hate God—are contrary in their nature to Him, and are aliens and enemies in their hearts : hence they often forget Him. 3. *We infer our liability to forget God from the facts that fall under our notice.* We need not go among pagans, nor penetrate recesses of licentiousness or haunts of vice. Let each individual examine his own heart. How often we forget God's presence, mercies, and laws. 4. *We infer our liability to forget God, from the testimonies of the Scriptures.* Read Ps. x. 4 ; xiv. 1-3 ; Job xxi. 14, 15 ; Rom. i. 28.

**II. Forgetfulness of God is an evil against which we should be peculiarly on our guard.** This is intimated in the text, founded on the following reasons :—1. *They who forget God must necessarily remain ignorant of Him.*



Ignorance of God is censurable, for man has capacity for knowing God. He is the most worthy object we can know. The Holy Spirit will help us to gain knowledge. But those who forget can never know Him; nothing can be known that is forgotten. 2. *They who forget God must necessarily disobey Him.* God's commandments are founded in justice, goodness, and truth; bind us to hate sin and love holiness; and in keeping them there is great reward. But they who forget God disobey, and disobedience is a great curse (*cf.* Deut. xxviii. 15-20). 3. *They who forget God must necessarily prove ungrateful to Him.* As our *Creator*, we are indebted to Him for bodies wonderfully made; souls exalted in their nature, and adapted for elevated and eternal enjoyments. As our *Benefactor*, He feeds, clothes, and defends us. As our *Saviour*, He gave His Son to die for us, His Spirit to strive with us, and His Gospel to encourage us. This loudly calls for gratitude. But who can be grateful that forgets God? Is not ingratitude a hateful, execrable crime? 4. *They who forget God must necessarily be punished by Him.* Necessarily, for God has threatened, and it is impossible for Him to lie (*cf.* Ps. ix. 17; Jud. iii. 7, 8).

III. Means should be used for the avoidance of this heinous crime. This is the object of the charge;—"Beware that thou forget not." 1. *Serious consideration should be exercised on all things that belong to our peace.* How lamentable the extreme thoughtlessness of men concerning their souls, salvation, and God! Avoid the crime of forgetting by giving yourselves up to serious consideration. "I thought on my ways." (Ps. cxix. 59; Deu. xxxii. 29; 2 Tim. 2-7.) 2. *Fervent and unremitting prayer should be offered up to God for a change of heart.* If not renewed in the spirit of our minds, we shall be habitually liable to forget God. If renewed and a right spirit put within us, we shall love and delight ourselves in God. 3. *We should constantly avoid those things which tend to exclude God from our thoughts.* The expression of the text is emphatic, *Beware*—be wary and suspicious of danger. Shun needless association with sinners who forget God and excite others to forget him. Be not too anxious to increase worldly prosperity, for nothing conduces more to forgetfulness of God than this! What a propensity to forget God when riches increase! 4. *Let us use all the means which tend to turn our thoughts towards God.* Associate with the godly—frequent religious ordinances—read God's holy word—contemplate death, judgment and eternity! In conclusion. 1. Inquire, do we forget God? This may serve as a discriminating mark of moral character. Christians love to think of God—sinners strive to forget him. 2. Exhort those who forget God to consider their folly, ingratitude, and danger.—*Beta.*

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORLDLY SUCCESS.—Verses 18-20.

1. How worldly success is to be obtained. By strict obedience to God's laws; by this only. *Work* is what He demands, and work is the only condition under which the prize may be won. 2. The nature of the profit we are to look for. Not merely worldly profit. No life so dreary, so deadly as that of the mere millionaire. The joys of the true man's life he cannot taste; the holy fellowships of spiritual being he cannot enter; God stamps him reprobate. There is a vast wealth of faculty in him, "fusing" from want of use. And power unused soon gets acrid, and mordant, and gnaws and wears within. 3. Why we should remember the Lord God. Because—1. It will bring us out at once into the glad sunlight, and will make even our toil lightsome; 2. It will spare us all wearing and crushing anxieties; 3. It will save us the shame and anguish of finding ourselves bankrupt at last and for ever.—*J. B. Brown, B.A.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 7.** *Bringeth thee into a good land.* "A blessed issue to a mournful story. Canaan was, indeed, a broad and royal domain for the once enslaved tribes. God, who took them into Egypt, also brought them into the land which flowed with milk and honey, and Egypt was in his purposes *en route* to Canaan. The way to heaven is *via* tribulation.

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."  
—*Spurgeon.*

*A good land*—free from scarceness, void of sorrow, and secure from dangers.

**Ver. 10.** *Bless the Lord.* Suitable requital, for goodness most constant, for gifts in rich abundance and undeserved.

**Ver. 11.** *Forget not.* God hates forgetfulness of His blessings. *First*, because He has commanded that we should not forget them. (Deut. iv. 9.) *Secondly*, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. *Thirdly*, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. *Fourthly*, it springs from unbelief. *Fifthly*, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude.—*Thomas le Blanc.*

**Ver. 15.** *Flint turned into a fountain.* Supplies from unlikely sources—a type of Divine grace in the hardest heart, and an argument for undeserving fidelity. Mighty streams flow to us in the wilderness. Has our return been commensurate?

**Vers. 15, 16.** *Divine supplies*—seasonable, plentiful and miraculous,

or *Divine interpositions* in direction, "led thee" protection, and necessities of life. *Manna in the wilderness.* A celebrated event. 1. On account of the *excellence* of the gift. Angel's food." (Ps. lxxviii. 25.) 2. On account of the *rarity* of the gift "which thy fathers knew not." 3. On account of the *source* of the gift "from heaven." 4. On account of the *place* in which it was given "in the wilderness." "God's banquets are never stinted; He gives the best diet and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of God's preparing, sending and bestowing. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above."—*Spurgeon.*

**Ver. 16.** *Good at latter end.* 1. Life divided into distinct periods which have beginning and end. 2. God has a purpose in view in the whole of life. 3. This purpose is good. 4. This purpose will only be fully realised at life's end. Canaan and heaven. "The 'latter end' of any one is the time which follows some distinct point in his life, particularly an important epoch-making point, and which may be regarded as the end by contrast, the time before that epoch being considered as the beginning."—*Delitzsch.*

**Vers. 19, 20.** *The danger of forgetting God.* 1. It leads to idolatry. If true God forgotten, another will be chosen, for we must have a God. 2. It leads to destruction. "Ye shall surely perish."

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII.

**Ver. 2.** *Years.* Life is crowded with pleasures. When there is shadow, it is because there is sunshine not far  
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off. Its weeds and thorns are known by contrast with surrounding flowers, and though upon many even of the

latter there may be raindrops, those that are without are yet more abounding. There are more smiles in the world than there are tears; there is more love than hate, more constancy than forsaking. Those that murmur the contrary choose not for thy companions.—*Leo. H. Grindon.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Chasteneth.* Afflictions are blessings to us when we can bless God for them. Suffering has kept many from sinning. God had one Son without sin, but He never had any without sorrow. Fiery trials make golden Christians; sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. (*Dyer.*) O God, I have made an ill use of thy mercies, if I have not learnt to be content with thy correction.—*Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Good land.* O the splendour of this brilliant conclusion to a gloomy history. Glory be unto him who saw in the apparent evil the true way to the real good. With patience we will endure the present gloom, for the morning cometh. Over the hills faith sees the daybreak, in whose light we shall enter into a wealthy place. (*Spurgeon.*) However long and dreary be the winter, we are always indemnified by the spring; not merely by the enjoyment of it when it comes, but by the anticipation. So with the mists and wintry days of life; while they last they are painful, but their clearing away is glorious, and we find that they are only veils and fore-runners of something bright. Nature never forgets her destination, nor Divine love its compensation.—*Leo. H. Grindon.*

Vers. 11–15. *Eaten and full.* “An epicure digs his grave with his teeth. Gluttony kills more than the sword.” In the day of good be thou in good.

When God gives thee prosperity, do thou enjoy it with a cheerful and thankful heart. (*Bp. Reynolds.*) “In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us.”

Ver. 16. *Latter end.* Works of providence, as works of creation, may begin in chaos, and seem “without form and void” (Gen. 1, 2;) but they end in admirable order and beauty. (*Bp. Reynolds.*)

Vers. 17, 18. *Wealth.* When the danger is past God is forgotten. (*Ray's proverbs.*) No sooner does the warm aspect of good fortune shine, than all the plans of virtue, raised like a beautiful frost-work in the winter season of adversity, thaw and disappear. (*Warburton.*) “What shall I come to, Father!” said a young man, “If I go on prospering in this way?” “To the grave,” replied the father.—*G. S. Bowes.*

Vers. 19, 20. *Other gods.* Any opinion which tends to keep out of sight the living and loving God, whether it be to substitute for Him an idol, or an occult agency, or a formal creed—can be nothing better than the portentous shadow projected from the slavish darkness of an ignorant heart. (*Hallam.*) *Perish.* All the princes of the earth have not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies, as God hath lost souls by the means of images.—*Bp. Hooper.*

With what unutterable humility  
We should bow down, thou blessed cross, to  
Thee,  
Seeing our vanity and foolishness,  
When to our own devices left, we frame  
A shameful creed of craft and cruelty.

*Landon.*



## CHAPTER IX.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Moses dissuadeth them from self-righteousness by recital of past sins and rebellion.

1. This day, this time. Once before they had been at the borders of Canaan; but did not enter. Fenced Oriental cities surrounded with high walls; cf. i. 28.

2. Anak, cf. Num. xiii. 22-33; Josh. xi. 21.

3. He, emphatic, consuming, cf. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29. Swift and complete destruction.

4. My right. The land given not on account of their own merits, they must not pride themselves, therefore, in success.

5. The wickedness of the Canaanites, and the word uttered by oath to patriarchs were the reasons for giving the land to Israel.

6. Instead of meriting anything they were stiff-necked, hard of neck, obstinate and rebellious cf. Ex. xxxii. 2; xxxiii. 35.

7-8. To prevent boasting of righteousness, acts of disobedience are rehearsed, in wild, as soon as free from Egypt. Also (even) in Horeb, "the conjunction introduces a special example of a general statement. The time and circumstances made the apostasy at Horeb particularly inexcusable." (*Sp. Com.*)

9-12. These circumstances should be remembered. Moses up in the mountain, fasting, receiving the tables of the law, specially written with the finger of God. When God was speaking in fire. In the day of assembly, when all the people were called out of the camp to the foot of Sinai (Ex. xix. 17); amid stupendous displays of divine majesty they corrupted themselves with the golden calf, cf. Ex. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 6.

12-14. Almost verbatim from Ex. xxxii. 7-10. Let me alone, desist from me, i.e., do not by intercession try to hinder me from destroying them. In Ex. xxxii. 10, "let me rest," i.e., cease to urge me.

15-17. The tables broken not as a mere outburst of indignation on his part, but as a declaration that they had broken the covenant by apostasy.

18-19. Moses briefly mentions the first intercession, Ex. xxxii. 11-13. Afterwards another 40 days were spent, and a second intercession (Ex. xxxiv. 9) given here, "not only that he might make the people thoroughly aware that at that time Israel could not boast even of the righteousness of its eminent men (cf. Is. xliii. 27), but also to bring out the fact, which is still more fully described in chap. x. 6 sqq., that Aaron's investiture with the priesthood, and the maintenance of this institution, was purely a work of Divine grace." (*Delitz.*)

20. Aaron left responsible, guilty, and proved unfit to lead.

22-24. Not only at Horeb, but at Tab., Num. xi. 1-3; Massah, Ex. xvii. 1 sqq.; Kib., Num. xi. 34; xxxiii. 16, 17, and Kadesh, Num. xiii. 26; xxxii. 8. "The list is not arranged chronologically, but advances gradually from the smaller to more serious forms of guilt." (*Keil.*)

25. Fell down second intercession, in fuller detail.

26-29. Essential points given. Israel were God's people; He redeemed them, and must not look upon their sins, i.e., punish them; but remember His oath to their ancestors. His honour was concerned.

28. Not able, through incapacity or hatred (cf. Num. xiv. 16), neither of which would hinder God from saving a people redeemed, and especially His own.

## A MEMORABLE DAY.—Verses 1-3.

Israel forty years before had reached the borders of the promised land, but to their mortification were driven back (cf. Hom. ii. 1-3). Now they were

certain to enter it and nothing could hinder them. "Thou art to pass over Jordan *this day*."

**I. A day displaying Divine goodness.** They had been fed, defended and guided. Goodness and mercies had followed them and that day crowned all.

**II. A day reminding of Divine faithfulness.** Long before had the promise been given to those who left all to follow Him. This promise was not forgotten, though delayed in its fulfilment. "God cannot lie."

**III. A day to be improved.** "*Hear*" (ver. 1) and learn duty. "*Understand*" how to practise it. "*Drive them out*," and thus co-operate with God (ver. 3.) When we appreciate and improve our privileges God will assure us of His presence and help. "As the Lord hath said unto thee"—

### DIVINE FAVOUR NOT HUMAN MERIT.—*Verses 4-6.*

God assures them of victory over enemies, and of possession of Canaan. But they were not to think that it was on account of their own righteousness—because good in their character or obedient in their service—that this favour was given to them. Israel were a stiff-necked and the Canaanites a corrupt people, all, therefore, must be ascribed to God's grace.

**I. In gaining earthly possessions.** Health and strength, houses and lands, family possessions and social distinctions are God's gifts and not human acquisitions. If we boast of our prudence and skill, from whence do these come? The means and the materials of prosperity must be ascribed to God's favour. Success in any undertaking, positions in life are not deserved, not given to merit, but in sovereign mercy. No credit whatever is due to us. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them (Ps. xliv. 3.)"

**II. In conflict with mighty foes.** The Anakims were famous in report and mighty in stature. Israel could not "stand before" them in the field. God alone could destroy them. Many foes array themselves against the Christian. Doubts and fears within; dangers and difficulties without, make him shrink from the encounter. Sinful habits, giant evils of every degree and strength oppose his efforts and progress. But faith in God makes "valiant in fight." He remembers the promise, the scenes of conflict and triumph in past experience and the victories of God's people in every age. Then his trembling heart takes courage, he goes into the combat, and the foe is vanquished or retreats. With God it is "Athanasius against the world," Luther against Popedom. Not by our own valour and numbers, in God's strength alone can we overcome. "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you. (Jos. xxiii. 10; cf. Lev. xxvi. 8.)"

**III. In the bestowment of religious privileges.** Christian ordinances and residence in a Christian country—pardon of sin a fruitful life—perfect peace and the joys of heaven spring from grace and not from "works of righteousness which we have done (Tit. iii. 5). There is no worth, no merit or cause in us. Hence Wickliffe's prayer: "Lord, save me *gratis*." "If by grace then is it, no more (longer) of works (as a moving cause), otherwise (in that case) grace is no more (longer) grace (*i.e.* it ceases to be grace)" (Rom. ii. 6).

"Tis not by works of righteousness  
Which our own hands have done," etc.

PENITENT REMEMBRANCE OF PAST SIN.—*Verses 7, 8, 22, 23.*

To make it evident that they had no reason to boast of their own righteousness, Moses reviews their sins. Generally they had provoked God, specially in certain places, and it was a mercy they had not been destroyed long before this. We forget our sins, think only of our good deeds, and become self-righteous, and self-satisfied. "*Remember and forget not.*"

**I. Remember sin in its aggravating circumstances.** Sin at any time is risky, but peculiar circumstances intensify its guilt. 1. *Aggravated by the special places in which it was committed.* Even at the Red Sea (*cf.* Ex. xiv. 11, and Ps. cvi. 7), when starting in their pilgrimage; also in Horeb v. 8, amid flames of fire and awful darkness (Ex. xxxii. 3-4). At Taberah they were discontented (Num. xi. 1-3); at Massah they murmured (Ex. xvii. 1); at Kibroth-hattaavah they lusted (Num. xi. 4); and at Kadesh-barnea, on the very borders of the land of promise, they reproached God and sought to return to Egypt (Num. xiv. 1). The list begins with lower forms, and advances to more aggravating evils. How often have we on solemn occasions and in holy places "been rebellious against the Lord." 2. *Aggravated by the frequency of its commission.* "From the day thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place" (verse 7.) Time after time were they warned, and check after check was given, but "they believed not His Word" (Ps. cvi. 24). Can we not remember solemn vows on beds of sickness, deep impressions in the House of God, followed up by forgetfulness and acts of wilful sin? "All their transgressions in all their sins" (Lev. xvi. 21).

**II. Remember sin in bitter experience.** In the light of inward feelings we may read the guilt of sin. Outward acts make deep impressions within us, and our own memory records the fruits of past disobedience. Israel had seen the death of arrogant Egyptians and wicked idolators—the miraculous power and gracious rewards of Jehovah. They knew the rewards of obedience, and the consequences of disobedience. They had been chastised and delivered, and sin in them had impaired memory, and blotted out all remembrance of God and His goodness. Most bitter is the fruit of sin in conscience and life. Its remnants are corruption, shame, and death. "What fruit (moral results) had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed (self reproached), for the end of these things is death (in its widest and most solemn sense" (Rom. vi. 21).

"Our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us."—*Shakespeare.*

**III. Remember sin in its consequences before God.** Sin not only brings bitter experience, but exposes to serious consequences before God. 1. *God was provoked.* "Ye provoked the Lord to wrath." He is not insensible, does not overlook sin. It is opposition to His nature, authority, and government. "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." 2. *Death was threatened.* "Angry with you to have destroyed you." Sin kindled the fire of Jehovah against them; but He was slow, very slow, to destroy them. They escaped, as we must escape, by a Mediator. "Had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath."

THE SIN OF HOREB.—*Verses 8-12.*

Israel continually sinned, and therefore deserved not the land into which they were about to enter. But some sins were specially provoking and shameful. The molten calf at Horeb must never be forgotten.



**I. It was a violation of God's covenant.** They had solemnly pledged themselves to obey God, and ratified the covenant with blood. "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. xxiv. 3-8). Feelings soon change, and emotions die away. Men are not cultured, not *spiritual* enough to worship an invisible (Rom. i. 20-25; Col. i. 15; Heb. xi. 27), they become *sensual* and demand a visible God. When we substitute anything for God, we practically deny Him. "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image."

**II. It was a provocation in most solemn circumstances.** The purpose of assembling, the scenes around them, and the reason for the absence of their leader, lent solemnity to the occasion. Moses contrasts the levity and guilt of the people, with his interview with God and his fasting on the mount. God was near, but they forgot Him. They defied every barrier. Moses was fasting, praying, and receiving the law; God was appearing in awful signs, yet they "quickly turned aside out of the way." "Also (even) in Horeb ye provoked the Lord."

**III. It was most corrupting in its influence.** They "have corrupted themselves" (verse 12). All sin debases body and mind. It is a moral putrefaction, and offensive to God. It renders men unprofitable (*i.e.* corrupt, useless, unfit for the end of their creation), Rom. iii. 12; Ps. xiv. 1-3. Man, once the high priest of Nature, the glorious link between the material and the spiritual, has forsaken his Maker, thrown off his holy robes and "corrupted his way." "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy."

### GOD PROVOKED AT HOREB.

On this part of Israel's history we copy from Spurgeon's *Treasury of David* (Ps. cvi. 7).

*To provoke*, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour, and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such as multiplies and repeats the action till the offence greatens and rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it aimed at Him in a threefold respect. 1. It rises up against the *power and prerogative of God*. An assault upon God sitting upon the throne, snatching his sceptre, defiance of his royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God, dares Him to strike to revenge the injury and invasion upon His honour—considers not the weight of His arm, but puffs at all and looks the terrors of revenging justice in the face. 2. Provoking God imports an *abuse of His goodness*. God clothed with power is the object of fear; but as He displays goodness, of love. By one He commands, by the other He wins, courts our obedience. An affront on His goodness, tenderness and love, as much exceeds an affront of His power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God works miracles of mercy to do good upon a people as He did upon the Israelites, was it not a provocation, infinitely base and insufferable, a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through. 3. Provoking God imports an affront upon *His long suffering and His patience*. The musings of Nature in the breast tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of His love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against His mercy; and how much more affrontive to despise majesty ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of penal law. But patience is a further, a higher advance of mercy—mercy drawn out at length, wrestling with baseness, and striving if

possible even to weary and outdo ingratitude ; therefore sin against this is the highest pitch of provocation. For when patience is tired, let all the inventions of mankind find something further upon which to hope, or against which to sin. The Israelites sinned against God's patience, one offence following upon another, the last rising highest, until the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to *swear* ; and what is more to *swear in His wrath* and with a full purpose of revenge, *that they should never enter into His rest.*—Robert South.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *Go in.* 1. Land to be possessed. 2. Go in and possess it—with courage in conflict—in dependence upon God's presence, not upon self-righteousness and human prowess. Israel were not casual invaders, forsaken of God, but now emboldened, and must no longer delay (*cf.* Num. xiii 25.) "Fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life."

Ver. 2. *Great and tall.* 1. Men of stature physically. 2. Mentally of gigantic mind. 3. Spiritually "the measure of the stature of the fulness in Christ Jesus." (Ep. iv. 13.)

Ver. 4. *Speak not.* Man apt to be proud *in heart.* When proud in heart *he speaks*, boasts of self-righteousness and good deeds. God seeks to check this spirit by His Word and providence—"Many had proved wise if they had not thought themselves so." *Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 4-6. *God doth drive them out*—in sovereign power—on account of their constant wickedness, therefore nothing due to you, fear lest you forfeit possessions and God's favour.

Ver. 7. *Grievous sins.* 1. Forgetfulness of God, "forget not." 2. Rebellion. "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord." 3. Continual provocation. "From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt."

Ver. 8. *The Lord was angry.* God is said to be angry when he doeth as an angry man useth to do : viz. (1)

chide ; (2) smite ; revenge being the next effect of anger.—*Trapp.*

1. A charge. "Ye provoked the Lord," by impenitence, forgetfulness, and disobedience. 2. A consequence. "The Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you." We are under deep obligations to God as Creator, Benefactor, and Saviour ; but too often unfaithfully forget his benefits, ungratefully murmur against his dealings and live in habitual rebellion. (Is. i. 2, 3.)

Vers. 8-12. I. The absent leader. "I was gone up into the mount." *a.* The purpose of his absence "to receive the tables of stone." *b.* The length of his absence, "forty days and forty nights." II. The Apostate People, "turned aside out of the way." (Ver. 12.) III. The sacrilegious act. "They have made them a molten calf." (Ex. xxxii. 7.) IV. The fearful consequences. God forsaken and self corruption. There is intimate connection between idolatry and self corruption.

*Corrupted themselves.* 1. Sin self debasing. 2. God's service our honour and adornment. God should be our glory, and we should not be a shame or dishonour to him. "Adorn the doctrine of God ; make it trim, neat, and lovely in the sight of others. (Tit. ii. 10.) Let there be beautiful harmony between profession and practice.

*The sin of Horeb.* I. The sin remembered. 1. Idolatry. Not merely forgetting, or disowning God, but setting up an idol in his place. 2. Idolatry of the worst kind : changing the glory of God into the similitude of

an ox. 3. The idolatry of Egypt under which they had suffered, and from which they had been delivered. 4. Idolatry after many wonderful interpositions of the true God in their behalf. II. The remembrance of sin. 1. For humiliation. It was the sin of

their fathers. 2. For self condemnation. "We have sinned with our fathers." It was our nature in them, and it is their nature in us that has committed this great sin.—*Treasury of David.*

### THE GREAT INTERCESSION—Verses 13–20.

This is a second mediation on the Mount. A mediation most remarkable and instructive. The crisis was terrible and trying to the great leader. But Moses stood "in the breach" and warded off the danger.

I. The need of intercession. Read these verses with Ex. xxxii., and we have the whole story. 1. *The people had sinned.* They had openly broken the law they solemnly vowed to keep. They had bowed to a calf in pretence of worshipping Jehovah. The contagion spread. The noise in the camp was not the noise of war, but of riot and dancing. "Ye have sinned a great sin." 2. *The people were exposed to death through sin.* God was provoked to "anger and hot displeasure" (verse 19). Sin is no trifle; it rouses Divine wrath, and this wrath burns sometimes like a fire. "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Ex. xxxii. 10). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." 3. *Aaron's life was endangered.* "The Lord was angry with Aaron to have destroyed him" (verse 20). Too weak to resist, he yielded to the people, received their gifts, and helped them to make the golden calf. He was a partaker in the guilt of idolatry, and would have suffered the penalty but for the intercession of Moses. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins."

II. The intercessor provided. "I fell down before the Lord." The spirit in which Moses pleaded, the arguments which he used, and the results which he gained, are special features in this intercession. In Moses we have—1. *Great earnestness.* "I fell down," not in mere formal attitude, but with intense feeling and energy. He was humble, but earnest. 2. *Great sympathy.* Formerly he had chosen their lot (Heb. xi. 25), and notwithstanding their unworthiness he does not forget them. His feeling for his people is a type of the sympathy of Jesus, our Mediator. 3. *Great disinterestedness.* He wished not for greatness at their expense, but refused an offer most tempting. His self-sacrifice is seen—(a) In abstaining from food. "I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins." (b) In his willingness to sacrifice life itself for their sake. "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book" (Ex. xxxii. 32). 4. *Great boldness.* His seemed a hopeless case, and "the odds were against him;" yet he ventures near, and pleads with boldness at God's feet. 5. *Great perseverance.* Many say, "You might as well give it up, it is all lost labour;" but Moses intercedes though repelled, "Let me alone;" intercedes though he himself "was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth." Long and perseveringly did he plead. I fell down "as at the first, forty days and forty nights."

III. The results of the intercession. Disheartening as were the circumstances, blessed results were gained. 1. *God hearkened to Moses.* What a change from, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." 2. *The people were delivered.* They were not consumed for their sins. "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people" (Ex. xxxii.



14). 3. *Aaron's life was spared.* "I prayed for Aaron also at the same time" (verse 20). What encouragement for us to plead for our friends and fellow-sinners. Never despair, for God is omnipotent and "delighteth in mercy." "Is there anything too hard for the Lord" (verse 2). If Moses prevailed, how much more does Jesus "who ever lives to intercede for us."

### AARON'S SIN.—Verse 20.

While Moses was up in the Mount, Aaron was left in charge to advise, direct and control the people. But how did he act? (*cf.* Ex. xxiv. 14; xxxii. 21-23).

I. *Aaron's sin.* Weak-minded, he was easily drawn into sin, aided and abetted it. We must neither bring sin upon others nor encourage them in it. His excuses were insufficient and false. "What did this people unto thee, that thou has brought so great a sin upon them?"

II. *Aaron's exposure to danger.* His whole conduct so angered God that he would have been destroyed but for the intercession of Moses. "The Lord was angry, very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him." No man's character and position can shelter him from the wrath of God.

III. *Aaron's deliverance.* "I prayed for Aaron also the same time." The most eminent and eloquent men sin and need an intercessor. Moses mildly rebuked his brother, but retaliates not. He prays for him and delivers him from death. What value, what power in the prayers of God's people. "The effectual fervent (in thought) prayer of a righteous man availeth (energizes) much." (Jas. v. 16.)

What are men better than sheep or goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is, every way  
Bound by gold chains about the fact of God.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13. *A stiff-necked people.* A metaphor taken from a horse that stiffens his neck against the reins and will not be guided by the rider. Hence it denotes a people obstinate, rebellious, who will not submit to God (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 9, xxxiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxx. 8; Ps. lxxv. 5; Jer. xvii. 23; Acts vii. 51).

Vers. 14. *Let me alone.* 1. God's indignation and apparent refusal to bless. 2. The power of prayer to change circumstances, if not the purpose of God. "The Lord repented of the evil."

"I will make" of thee a nation.

1. The promise—a nation, mightier

and greater than they. 2. The condition of its fulfilment. To obtain self aggrandisement at the sacrifice of the people. 3. The refusal of this condition. The test was severe, but the spirit in which it was met redounds to the honour of Moses.

Vers. 15-17. *The broken tables.* 1. An expression of righteous indignation. Perhaps a revival of the spirit which had formerly led him astray (Ex. ii. 12). 2. A symbol of the broken covenant. 3. A witness to exclusion from Divine favour. This was a solemn sight, which should have deeply impressed their hearts when they saw the blessings which they had lost.

Vers. 18-19. 1. Fear of Divine anger. 2. Prayer for Divine help. 3. Interposition of Divine mercy.

Vers. 20. Learn.—1. That a good

man may very grievously sin. 2. That his good deeds cannot save him from the consequences of his sin. 3. That there is no sin which does not require atonement and mediation.

### THE IDOL DESTROYED.—Verse 21.

Israel in Egypt had some leaning towards idolatry; but miraculous events since the exodus had checked this tendency. Now in the absence of Moses, the cry was raised “Make us a god.” The god was made and then destroyed. In this we see—1. *The Anger of Moses.* The gospel enjoins broadest love to the sinner, but deepest indignation against sin. Pity not only makes benevolent and charitable, but imparts strength and zeal to resist Satan. Yet like all other passions, “righteous indignation,” needs controlling grace and must not be unwisely exercised. “That anger is without sin; that is, against sin.” (*Mason*). “Be ye angry and sin not.” 2. *The courage of Moses.* The meekest man may be firm and courageous. Six hundred thousand seem paralyzed before one man who stands up for God (Deut. xxxii. 30). When conscious of right and our cause good we need not fear. “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. xxviii. 1; Ps. liii. 5). Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful. 3. *The vanity of the idol.* How impotent this God before Moses. How stupid the people and how foolish their conduct! How irrational to adore idols less valuable, less honoured than their makers! The golden idols of self, and worldly pleasure are blind and senseless. Their worship is folly, wickedness and death. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

### GRIEVOUS REBELLIONS.—Verses 22-24.

Moses here reminds them of minor sins, of other places besides Horeb, in which they rebelled against God. These memorials of sin and punishment should humble them and enhance God’s mercy to them. Notice—

1. *The Divine Command.* “Go up and possess the land.” This direction had been given many times—given with emphasis and detail. God repeats directions in “line upon line” to satisfy reasonable doubt and stimulate to hearty obedience. Let us say with the prophet, “I will watch to see what he will say unto me.”

II. *Israel’s disobedience to this command.* “Ye rebelled against the commandment.” 1. Unbelief was the source of this rebellion. “Ye believed Him not.” Without faith no impression can be made upon the heart by sense, reason, or miracle. Stones are rounded and smoothed by the friction of water; but the heart of unbelief is hard and insensible to Divine goodness and Divine threatening. 2. Refusing to hear was the sign of unbelief. “Nor hearkened to His voice.” Listless inattention to the word is sure proof of unbelief. If we believe not the word of God, we cannot esteem His gifts nor “possess the land.” “When pilgrims to the celestial city begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey’s end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travellers” (*Spurgeon*). “They could not enter in because of unbelief.”

III. *The rebellion which resulted from this disobedience.* Stubborn refusal was repeated, and rebellion, open and long-continued, was the sad result. Con-

tinuance in sin and unbelief always go together. There is reflex influence upon faith and character. First unbelief, then disobedience to the word, and, lastly, open defiance. "Man knows the beginning of sin; but who bounds the issues thereof?" says one. "He addeth rebellion unto his sin" (Job xxxiv. 37).

### PROLONGED INTERCESSION.—*Verses 25–29.*

Moses retires to his mediation on account of apostasy at Sinai (*cf.* verses 18–20). Whether the forty days mean a second, or only describe the first period, we see how earnest and prolonged the intercession was.

**I. The intercession of Moses for his people.** The sin at Horeb was most provoking—the climax of one long rebellion. God threatened destruction, and Moses goes between to intercede and save. 1. *In the agony of prayer.* "I fell down" in profound humility and intense anxiety. The best of men have thus pleaded for others. Knox cried, "O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die." It is said that Latimer was so constant and earnest in prayer during his imprisonment, that he was unable to rise up without help. 2. *With symbols of grief* (verse 18). His soul was stirred within him, and he fasted in grief. Personal need and personal advancement were forgotten. "I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh. i 4).

**II. The pleas which Moses urged in this intercession.** He was obliged to own their wickedness, and could only bow his head in solemn prayer. "Their character was bad indeed," says Matthew Henry, "when he that appeared an advocate for them could not give them a good word, and had nothing else to say on their behalf, but that God had done great things for them, which really did but aggravate their crime." 1. *He pleads God's ownership of them.* "Thy people and thine inheritance." After creating and purchasing them wilt Thou destroy them! "Remember Thy congregation which Thou has purchased of old." 2. *He pleads God's goodness to them.* They were redeemed and brought out of Egypt. He knew them; had taken great care of them and worked miracles on their behalf. How strange, how inconsistent now to forsake them! No man is willing to lose his property and no king will relinquish his dominions. God will, therefore, keep his own and maintain His right over His people. 3. *He pleads God's covenant with their fathers.* "Remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The people are still the posterity of Jacob, and their rebellion does not alter Thy purpose to give them the land. God desires to be reminded of His promise, that a sense of His faithfulness and our unworthiness may be deepened within us. 4. *He pleads the honour of God Himself.* (Ver. 28.) We should ever be jealous for the glory of God and the interests of His people. If God destroyed Israel what would the Egyptians say! How the enemy would rejoice and sound aloud their triumph. (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 12, 13.) They would say: 1. *God was unable to help.* "The Lord was not able to bring them into the land." Was Divine energy spent. Had God been overcome or lost His omnipotence to save. Oh never let this be said! That mighty hand is not shortened that it cannot save. (Is. lix. 1.) "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? (Is. i. 2), or, 2. *God hated His people.* "Because He hated them." Stiffnecked and most provoking had they been; but Divine love was unchangeable. God will never cast off His people. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 21. *Dust in the brook.*** The dregs of sin. No other water to drink, and this most bitter and unsatisfactory. Sin curses our blessings and embitters our enjoyments. (Mal. ii. 2.) As Moses destroyed the form, calcined the material of this idol and reduced it to powder, so must all idols be destroyed. The people seemed to swallow their own sin, so bitterness follows indulgence. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." "He shall drink as he brews," says Mt. Henry.

**Vers. 24-26.** The great sin. The terrible danger. The power of a

righteous man in turning away danger. Mighty as was the sin of Israel, the prayer of Moses was mightier. How earnestly should we plead for a backsliding people and a guilty world! "I *prayed*, and he had a hard tug of it; but prayer is the best lever at a dead lift."—*Trapp*.

**Vers. 26, 27.** 1. A people enslaved, wicked and rebellious; yet chosen, redeemed and purchased. 2. God's remembrance and faithfulness. "Thou O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not." (Jer. xiv. 9; cf. Ps. xc. 7; 1 Kings viii. 51.)

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IX.

**Vers. 1-3. *Mightier.*** Never covet *easy* paths. The Lord keep you and me from that sin, beloved. (*J. H. Evans*.) A soldier in battle should feel as if the whole battle depended upon himself. *Pass over.* We are afraid of being desperate Christians. Oh, let us be desperate! The Church needs extremity—a great tug out of the world. (*Lady Powerscourt*.) *Stand before.* A passionate desire and unwearied will can perform impossibilities, or what seem to be such to the old and feeble. If we do but go on some unseen path will open up the hills. We must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by the apparent disproportion between the result of the single efforts and the magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome.—*Sharp*.

**Vers. 4-C. *My righteousness.*** It is the peculiar glory of gospel grace to humble every believer in the dust, and from gratitude and love to produce the best obedience. This grace will carry us, if we do not wifully betray our trust, victoriously through all difficulties (2 Cor. xii. 9).

"The greatest attribute of Heav'n is mercy; And 'tis the crown of justice, and the glory Where it may kill with right, to save with pity."—*Beaumont and Fletcher*.

**Ver. 7. *Forget.*** The sin of the understanding leads on to the sin of the memory. What is not understood will soon be forgotten. Men feel little interest in preserving husks; if they know nothing of the inner kernel they will take no care of the shells. It was an aggravation of Israel's sin that when God's mercies were so numerous they yet were able to forget them. Surely some out of such a multitude of benefits ought to have remained engraven upon their hearts; but if grace does not give us understanding, nature will soon cast out the memory of God's great goodness.—*Spurgeon*.

**Vers. 8-17. *Horeb.*** The ox image here is sarcastically called "a calf;" idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God.—*Spurgeon*.

***Molten image.*** They had given up the true God whom it had been their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to Him, not a representation of Him; for how should He be likened to a bullock? False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped

are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. God abhors them and so do we.—*Spurgeon*.

Ver. 12. *Arise* from off thy knees, the petitioner's posture. St. James, they say, had knees as hard as camels' knees, with continual kneeling; and Hilarion was found dead in his oratory with knees bent, eyes and hands lifted up.—*Trapp*.

Ver. 17. *Cast them*. Drive away nature and back it comes at a gallop (*French proverb*). Whosoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul. Men must not turn bees and kill themselves in stinging others.—*Bacon*.

Vers. 22-24. *From the day that*

*I knew you*. To fall out at starting was a bad sign. Those who did not begin well can hardly be expected to end well. Israel is not quite out of Egypt, and yet begins to provoke the Lord by doubting His power and questioning his faithfulness to his promise.—*Spurgeon*.

Vers. 26-29. *Prayed*. "The gift of the knees." "The impotence of man with the omnipotence of God." It is not the length but the *strength* of prayer that is required, not so much the labour of life, as the travail of the heart.

"Pleads he in earnest? look upon his face;  
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are in  
jest;  
His words come from his mouth, ours from  
our breast:  
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;  
We pray with heart and soul, and all beside."  
*Shakespeare*.

## CHAPTER X.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—1. *That time*. The order for the ark was given before the apostasy of the people, cf. Ex. xxv., and the tables were put into it after the dedication of the tabernacle. But Moses connects events related to each other for his own purpose without strict chronological order. *Hew*, cut with an axe, to shape. *Tables*, blocks or tablets.

3. *Shittim*. *Acacia tree*, Ex. xxv. 5.

5. *There they be*. "Another minute but important circumstance, the public mention of which at the time attests the veracity of the sacred historian."

6. *Beeroth*. Identical with *Benejaakan* of Num. xxxiii. 31. *Mosera* and *Moseroth* (plu.), in the vicinity of mount Hor (Num. xxxiii. 31); as Aaron died there, *Eleazar* ministered—was installed priest, Ex. xxiii. 25; xxviii. 1.

7. *Gudgodah*. *Hor-hagidgad* (mount of thunder, Num. xxxiii. 32). *Jotbath*—*Jotbathah* of Num. xxxiii. 33.

8. *That time*. Of encampment at Sinai thirty-eight years since. The tribe of *Levi* separated from other tribes. *Stand*. Exclusively the business of priests, Num. vi. 23. Non-priestly family of *Kohath* carried the ark, Num. iv. 15.

9. *Cf.* Num. xviii. 20-24; Deut. xviii. 1, 2.

10. *Moses resumes his address and sums up the results of his intercession*.

11. "This commandment and promise was a testimony that God now was reconciled unto them by the intercession of Moses" (*Ainsworth*).

12. *Now, i.e.*, "Since all that thou hast is thus shown to be of mere grace, without desert of thine own." *Require, etc.*, i.e. understand the spiritual claims of these formal regulations. *Fear*. Filial fear, pious reverence, existing only with love. *Walk*. Accept truth, and follow the course

rescribed, cf. Gen. xviii. 19; Ps. xxv. 4, 5; Acts xviii. 25, 26. Serve. The genuine fruit of love, John xiv. 15; Gal. v. 13; 1 John iii. 18.

14. Heaven of heavens imports all included under the name of heaven. Jehovah is not a local God. His claims cannot be limited, cf. 1 Kings viii. 27; Ps. cxlviii. 4.

15. He was not bound to elect Israel, yet did so of His own free will.

16. Circumcise, therefore be no longer stiffnecked; be not insensible to God's love, persist no longer in obstinate resistance to God.

17. The demand for surrender is followed by a description of the nature and acts of Jehovah. He is not a local Deity, and though taking special interest in Israel—He is *God of gods, i.e.*, the supreme God, the essence of all that is divine, of all power and might, Ps. cxxxvi. 2. *Lord of lords*, supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, *regardeth*, not subject to prejudice, nor perverts justice as human judges, Lev. xix. 15; 2 Chron. xix. 7.

18, 19. He is impartial and uncorruptible, executes, vindicates the rights of the defenceless (orphan and widow) and manifests loving care for the helpless and oppressed (stranger).

19. Love. As they had been strangers in Egypt, and knew what it was to need help, they were to love the stranger as God loved him, and relieve his wants, Jas ii. 15, 16; 1 Jno. iii. 10, 17.

20-22. Fear. Reverence is due to God in act and life on account of what He is and what He has done. He is the ground of confidence and joy (thy praise), inspiring fear and dread by *terrible things* done for them.

21. Amongst the mighty acts was one specially to be remembered.

22. Out of 70 persons, notwithstanding cruelty and oppression, had grown a mighty nation' Gen. xli. 26; Acts vii. 14.

### THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PRAYER.—Verses 1-11.

Through the intercession of Moses God not only spared Israel, but gave them further pledges of His love.

I. The law was renewed. "He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing." (Ver. 4.) God refused not a second transcript of his will, but in mercy renewed his covenant with them. 1. *The law written with the finger of God.* At first a supernatural "voice" was heard, now a supernatural hand writes and repeats the ten words. 2. *The law unaltered.* The second edition was "like unto the first." It needed no correction, no amendment. What God wrote differed not from what he spoke. The written word is from God and unchangeable, as the spoken word. 3. *The law kept in the ark.* "Put the tables in the ark." (Ver. 5.) Thus was it perpetuated and transmitted to us. Unto us are "committed the oracles of God." Let us understand, keep, and spread them.

II. The priesthood was established. The institution was forty years old, but provision was made for a standing order, perpetual succession, and settled maintenance. 1. *The high priesthood in the person of Eleazar.* Aaron died, but his son succeeded him. God will never want men to carry on His work. The robes of office will never soil. "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." 2. *The ordinary priesthood in the tribe of Levi.* This tribe was specially chosen for the service of the sanctuary. A settled ministry is the gift of God to the Church, (Ep. iv. 11.) The continuation of this ministry and the preservation of religious ordinances, betoken God's favour. God can remove the candlestick (Rev. ii. 4) and punish sin. Hence need of prayer for ministers. "Brethren, pray for us."

III. The command to advance was given. Permission to march was gained



by prayer. Moses the intercessor must be the leader (ver. 11.) Those are only fit to lead who preserve from ruin. God gives a full and unconditional promise of his presence. There can be no guidance and advance in life without Him. He can stop progress at any time and in any department of life. Hence "prayer hinders no journey." "I forgot to pray this morning," says Philip Henry, "and the chariot wheels drove heavily along." The most prayerful ministers and people are the most prosperous and progressive. Unexpected and marvellous things may be witnessed through prayer. "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE.—*Verses 8, 9.*

Moses mentions as a special favour that when Aaron died the high priesthood was renewed in the person of Eleazar, and that the Levites were separated to minister in the tabernacle and perpetuate the ordinary priesthood.

**I. The Ministry appointed.** The tribe of Levi were most zealous for the honour of the Lord when the golden calf was worshipped at Sinai (Ex. xxxii. 26-29). Moses then charged them to consecrate themselves (*lit.* to fill their hands) to the Lord (ver. 29). Independent of the fact that Moses and Aaron belonged to this tribe, there was, therefore, special reason for its selection. 1. *It is honourable service.* If it be deemed a preferment to minister to an earthly sovereign, how much more to be servant of "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords." "Happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee." (2 Chr. ix. 7.) 2. *It is holy service,* separated and consecrated to the Lord. They had to do with "the most holy things," and had to be washed, cleansed, and offered for an offering. (Num. viii. 15.) Holy and pure life must be seen in the service of God. 3. *It is responsible service.* They had to "minister." Priests are servants; not "Lords over God's heritage." (1 Pet. v. 3.) No toil so responsible and noble as this. Christ himself came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." 4. *It is joyful service.* "To bless His name." Levites sang and played on instruments. God's service is not irksome but joyous, free, and delightful.

**II. The introduction to this ministry.** Under the Gospel all believers are called into holy service, and raised to the dignity of "sons," "kings," and "priests." But for the Christian ministry there must be: 1. *Divine call.* "The Lord separated," the Lord spake, not to sanction some human plan, but to reveal his own. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." 2. *Divine direction.* The office is not only created, but its duties minutely specified. To bear the ark, to stand and minister, and to bless the Lord and the people. 3. *Divine qualification.* Suitable gifts, inward persuasion by the Holy Spirit, and commission to draw nigh. None are meet for holy ministry, but by the grace of God and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost (*cf.* 2 Cor. ii. 16; Gal. i. 15.)

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1-3. Tables.** First uttered in fire, written on stone, renewed in mercy, and preserved and portable in the ark. *Like the first.* "Which Moses had broken; to show how we in

our nature had broken the law, and could not be saved by the keeping of it. This Christ, our true Moses, repairs again, writing the law not in tables of stone, but in the hearts of

believers, and enabling them in some good measure to keep it (John i. 17), walking, as Luther phraseth it, in the heaven of the promise, but in the earth of the law; that in respect of believing, this of obeying.—*Trapp*.

Ver. 6. The relation between the ordinances of religion and temporal blessings. "The earlier commentators observed the inward connection between the continuation of the high-priesthood and the water brooks. *J. Gerhard*, for example, observes: "God generally associates material blessings with spiritual; as long as the ministry of the Word and the observance of Divine worship flourish among us, God will also provide for our temporal necessities."—*Keil*.

*Aaron's death and Eleazar's succession.* I. The common destiny of men. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." II. The providence of God in the arrangement of this destiny. All life depends upon God. Aaron died according to a Divine purpose "into Mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there." (Num. xxxiii. 38. III. The mercy of God in appointing successors to the office of the dead. Eleazar immediately, authoritatively, and securely took the place of Aaron. This, an evidence of reconciliation, encouraging to faith and humbling to pride. IV. The pledge of perpetuity to the cause of God. God's servants die, but the work goes on and ever will do. *Aaron's death.* 1. An indication of Divine displeasure. 2. A manifestation of mercy. He was not put to death as a transgressor by fire or plague from heaven; but dies in ease and honour. 3. A significant type. Aaron did not enter Canaan. The Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect. Christ brings in a better hope and an eternal priesthood. (Heb. vii. 23–25.) *Priest's office.* Invested with awful solemnity, Divine authority, and heavenly sanctity. Must not be undertaken lightly, unworthily, but in the fear, and for the glory of God, and the interests of men.

Ver. 8. *Minister service.* I. The

service of God demands all Levites. Every Christian should be a priest, ever ministering in the temple. 1. Burden-bearing. How often Christians murmur about their burdens, as though they were not honoured in being permitted to bear anything for God. 2. Singing. The Levites sang and played on instruments. Sing the song of gratitude and contentment. 3. Studying the law. "Search the Scriptures." 4. Attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary. There is a special blessing for those who worship in God's house. II. God demands this service in our prime; "from twenty and five years old." We must give God the best we have. III. He demands this service when it can be most easily rendered. God did not ask of the Levites, nor does of us, impossibilities. The very young and the old were exempt from the bearing of the heavier burdens. God suits the burden to the back. All He asks is, that we shall do what we can.—*R. A. Griffin*.

Ver. 9. *Levi's inheritance and glory.* Not material wealth, such as houses and land. They were not permitted to engage in secular pursuits, but had to employ themselves wholly to God's service. God has their inheritance in the riches of his grace and the resources of his providence. "I am their inheritance, and ye shall give them no possession in Israel. I am their possession." (Ezek. xlv. 28.)

Ver. 11. *Arise.* 1. God has prepared an inheritance for his people. Joy, fruitfulness and power on earth, through faith; rest and heaven hereafter. 2. God's people should earnestly strive to attain this inheritance. The command to arise supposes neglect, weakness and prostration. 3. God will help His people when they strive to obey Him. He will provide a leader. "Take thy journey before the people." He will pledge his word to give success; "possess the land, which I swore I unto their fathers to give unto them."

## HUMAN OBLIGATION TO DIVINE GOODNESS.—Verses 12-22.

God having expressed His love and care towards them in their selection, having pardoned their apostasy, preserved their priesthood and privileges, He seeks to persuade them to love Him in return. "*And now Israel*" ("now that thou hast everything without desert or worthiness, purely from forgiving grace," *Keil*). "What doth the Lord require?" Under what obligation art thou put, but to fear and obey him? We give the sketch of the remaining chapter.

**I. Divine Requirements.** God's commands are just and reasonable. Mercies received require some return. "What shall I render?" (Ps. cxvi. 12.) 1. *To fear and obey God.* Be humble, thankful, and no longer refractory. Cherish reverence for the name and will of God. This fear must awaken love, and this love must prompt to active service. 2. *To purify the heart and life* (ver. 16). Circumcision was a symbol of purity and consecration to God. Be not insensible, but holy in heart and life. The heart and will must be renewed, and we must "abstain from fleshly lusts." 3. *To love strangers and practise hospitality* (ver. 19). We must defend the weak, be kind to strangers, impartial to all, and compassionate to all.

**II. The motives to enforce these Requirements.** This duty is enforced from many considerations. 1. *Personal advantage should prompt it.* "For thy good," (verse 13). Rewards of obedience are abundant in the present life. Our ease, comfort, and happiness are concerned; "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 2. *The divine nature claims it.* Jehovah cannot tolerate pride and stiff-neckedness towards Himself or towards other persons. In his nature and moral government we find abundant reasons for loving Him. (a) *God is supreme* (verse 14). His authority is not local nor circumscribed. He fills heaven and earth. (b) *God is rich in mercy* (verse 15). He chose Israel, not for what He saw in them; of His own free will He delighted in their fathers, and in sovereign mercy He made them "above all people." (c) *God is all powerful* (verse 17). Men fear powerful monarchs. God's omnipotence is always exerted to deliver from danger and do good. Hence, reverence due to His great name. (d) *God is no respecter of persons.* He is just and upright in nature, impartial and incorruptible in His dealings. Appearances deceive Him not; nor does He regard forms, professions and privileges without reality. "God accepteth no man's person" (Gal. ii. 6). 3. *Divine goodness deserves it.* Constant benefits require constant thanks. Partial gratitude and services are worthless. We must have "respect to all the commandments." "An honest soul would not conceal any debt he was to God," says Gurnall, "but calls upon itself to give an account for all his benefits. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music. Unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest." Reverence is due to God. (a) *For His gracious acts for His people* (verse 21). Terrible deeds were done for Israel, and great things have been shown to us. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you" (1 Sam. xii. 24). (b) *For abundant prosperity unto His people* (verse 22). Israel's history and increase had been marvellous. From few, they had become many; from a weak, they had become a mighty nation. They were multiplied as the stars of heaven and blessed beyond degree! What then did they owe to God? Why be obstinate and disobedient?

"O! to grace how great a debtor,  
Daily I'm constrained to be."



GOD'S CLAIMS UPON OUR SERVICE.—*Verses 12-16.*

The intercession of Moses secured new blessings. New obedience should therefore be given to God, who bestowed them. The service which God claims is specified in its nature, breadth, and activity.

I. The nature of the service claimed. It is summed up and touchingly enforced in few words. "*What doth the Lord require?*" 1. *Willing service.* "*What require?*" The word signifies to ask or request. God in the law of Moses commanded many observances and enforced obedience when required; but love and veneration must be voluntary. God does not rule men like suns and stars, nor like brutes; but appeals to reason and conscience—solicits and requests our service. "Who then is *willing* this day?" etc. "*Will ye be my disciples?*" What an attitude for the Omnipotent and Eternal God to assume towards man! How lovingly and beseechingly does he request our obedience. "But to Israel He saith, all day long (*i.e.*, with unwearied patience) I have stretched forth My hands (like a mother calling back her child, in gracious, earnest entreaty) unto a disobedient and gainsaying (refractory, or stubborn) people." (Rom. x. 21.) 2. *Practical service.* Genuine religion is always practical, not mere feeling and form. It is fear, obedience, and love. (a) *To fear the Lord*, not with slavish fear—a fear which hath torment, and is opposed to love (1 Jno. iv. 18) but a filial reverence. (b) *To love Him.* Love and fear go together. Reverence in a child begets true affection. When our feelings, our hearts are right we naturally yield to God our profoundest reverence. (c) *To serve him.* When love fills our hearts, it will express itself in life. We shall instinctively cleave to God and "*walk in all His ways.*" We shall fear to offend Him and dread separation from Him. We shall *serve* God with heart and soul. Our religion will not be in word but in deed. We may suspect our religion, suspect our interest in Christ, if we have no delight in His service, no love for His person. The law must be written in our hearts, as a permanent principle and conserving force of life (Ps. xxxvii. 31.) Our service must be spiritual; our obedience free and hearty; and our love fervent and sincere.

Not by the terrors of a slave  
Do they perform his will;  
But with the noblest powers they have,  
His sweet commands fulfil.

II. The ground on which the claim is urged. The appeal for future loyalty is made on several grounds. Let us suggest three. 1. *It is rational.* "What doth the Lord require; anything unreasonable, impossible, or inconsistent? Can God ask less than what is due to him? He does not "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne." "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." 2. *It is enforced by covenant.* "The Lord thy God." Israel was ever reminded of this relationship and the duties which spring from it. Whatever God was in Himself He was to them; all His perfections were enlisted on their behalf. In the covenant with Christ God regards His people as specially His own and bestows upon them greater blessings. As creatures, as property, God has a right to claim us. But if His children, bought with blood, we should love Him with all our heart. If He has made solemn compacts, pledged Himself and all His resources to help, we should make no reserve whatever, but devote ourselves, body, soul and spirit unto Him. 3. *It is due from constant mercies.* He brought us into being; dignified us with understanding; sustained and redeemed our life from destruction. For us He has given His word, sent His son and opened heaven. Some return is due and should be rendered to Him. Mercies have been great, constant, and multiplied. Special

favours demand special service, as those who keep the largest farms pay the most rent. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (in providence and grace) that ye present your bodies (*i.e.* your whole selves) a living sacrifice (in contrast to dead beasts offered under law) holy, acceptable (well pleasing) to God, which is your reasonable (rational) service; *i.e.* a service befitting a rational being" (Rom. xii. 1).

III. The needful qualification to render the service. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart" (ver. 16). 1. *We are naturally sinful.* Circumcision teaches that we are impure, and unfit for God and His service. We must mortify our members which are upon earth (Col. iii. 5); crucify the affections and lusts of the flesh (Gal. v. 24); renounce act of all sin and selfwill and sever ourselves from sensuality. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). 2. *The needed qualification is a circumcised heart.* True obedience can only spring from a renewed loving heart. When enmity is subdued and affection planted within us, then God gives filial fear, or the spirit of adoption; then service is not task work. Slavery and selfishness pass away, and duty becomes hearty and enthusiastic. When love reigns in the heart, the whole man will be brought under sway. All our powers will be employed in doing the will, and promoting the glory of God. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12, 13. *Study the clauses of this requirement.* God's exactions, if we be Christians, are our own free will offerings. What God demands is what thankful hearts should gladly give. First of all to *fear Him*. Not to be terrified, that is the natural man's religion. Unless taught of God men look upon Him with terror and alarm. Hence religion is a sepulchral and gloomy thing to them. To the Christian all is reverse. He has no alarm; he courts God's presence and feels that presence to be the inspiration of hope and joy. Next to *walk* in all his ways. All the ways proceed from one source and terminate in the same again. There are varieties of expression, but one religion. A way of righteousness a way of truth, a way of peace, and a way of pleasantness. All are different paths which God has prescribed for His people; and they that are His people are found walking in them. Walk, not to stand still, in His ways—not your own. Then "to *love Him*." If the fear enjoined were terror, it would be impossible to love. Love is the germ in the heart that blossoms and bursts into all the fragrant fruits de-

manded by God's holy law. The law, like the imperious taskmaster, says, "Give me fruit," and you cannot; but love softly, progressively, originates and develops all the fruits of the Spirit. The absence of this love is the absence of Christianity. This love, lost in the fall, regained by the cross, is the result of seeing God's love for us. The measure and extent is "all your hearts." Not more than human strength, not less than will fill the heart is required. Think of the equity of the law, and of its greatness. Not cold, calculating preference; but warm, cordial attachment—attachment not blind and unintelligible, but with all the soul. Also to *serve him*, service in the sense of worship. The word liturgy strictly means service; here service means adore, pray, and praise; worship outwardly, publicly, and privately with all the heart. We learn the essence of all true acceptable worship before God. Not material glory, ritual splendour; but depth of sincerity, intensity of love, the supremacy of God in the heart. What is the *end* of all this? First, God asks this, not for His benefit, but for our good. Is there no benefit

in meeting together in the house of God, in unloading the thankful heart in praise? When you give the greatest glory, worship, and homage to God, the reaction of it is showers of blessings, mercies, and privileges upon yourselves. God requires this in His word, in seasons of affliction and prosperity. He requires it that holy effects may be seen, and that men may feel that religion purifies. It is also good for the world. The best evidence that you are Christians is in what you feel, suffer, sacrifice, and do; not as servants obeying for reward, but as sons serving God out of affection.—*Dr. Cumming*.

Ver. 13. *Keep (shamar)* signifies to keep diligently, carefully, faithfully; as watchmen keep the city, soldiers their garrisons, or jailors their prisoners (1 Kings xx. 39; Job xii. 12). God would have His people thus to keep His commandments and statutes, and to do this on account of those high acts of favour and grace that He had shewed them; and what is this but to be a holy people, yea, a very holy people unto the Lord.—*Brooks*.

*Our duty towards God.* Consider—  
I. That we have a duty to perform towards God. A duty of—1. Holy fear.

2. Perfect obedience. 3. Love. 4. Willing service. II. That this duty is enforced by many considerations. 1. Obedience to God's commands will be to our own advantage. 2. We have been especially favoured by God; gratitude should impel us to serve Him. 3. The consequences of enmity to Him are fearful in the highest degree.—*E. Lockwood*.

Vers. 12, 13, 19. *The sum of human duty.* Its nature, basis, and motives. *cf.* "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah vi. 8).

*The reasonableness of God's law.* Many think it stern and severe, and impossible for man to obey. If God required more than man can give, this would be opposed to His word, indicate tyranny in His government, and would free man from blame. But God asks for service, not from angelic powers, but service of a nature adapted to our own. His requirements are clear as noonday, and equal as they can be, and the plea cannot be sustained. "O, house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" etc. (Ezek. xviii. 29, 30).—*A. Barnes*.

### GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.—*Verse 17.*

In this sublime description of God we have a brief phrase indicating the impartial, incorruptible, and righteous method of His government. "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." He shows no favour, nor is he bribed in judging men. "There is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 11).

I. In the laws of Moral Government.—Natural laws make no discrimination, no distinction in their nature, purpose, and penalties. Nature accepts no bribes and regards no tears in her retributive dealings. There is "natural law in the spiritual world," the same kind of procedure as in the natural world. The Jew has no advantage over the Gentile. Though His chosen people, God will not tolerate sin in them any more than in other nations. Men everywhere have the same wants, are subject to the same diseases, and doomed to the same grave. "The small and the great are there, and the servant is free as his master." Spiritually "there is no difference (in their relation to God's righteous government), for all have sinned and come short (failed to attain) the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22, 23).

II. In the method of Salvation.—If men are equally guilty, none are deserving, and none are saved by their own good works. He "accepteth not



the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of His hands" (Job xxxiv. 19). If saved at all, they are saved "freely by His grace." Peter could not believe that the gospel must be offered to the Gentiles, and that they stood on the same basis of acceptance as the favoured people. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34).

**III. In the accounts of the Judgment Day.**—This day will vindicate the righteousness of God in the rewards of the just and the punishment of the unjust. Then will the eternal principles of the Divine government be fully asserted and vindicated. There will be one impartial award, the righteous Judge "will render to every one according to his *deeds*" (Rom. ii. 6-11). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. vi. 10).

### LOVE TO THE STRANGER.—Verse 19.

Strangers were in danger of being treated as foreigners and aliens among the Israelites. But many humane laws were enacted and repeated for their benefit. They were not merely to be tolerated, but to be respected, regarded as members of the Commonwealth—to be put on perfect equality with the Israelites. There are two reasons given for consideration to strangers.

**I. God loves the stranger.** Though great and terrible, yet He is kind and affectionate towards the helpless and oppressed. The more defenceless the greater the claim upon His compassion. "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God, in His holy habitation." Kindness to the stranger has been considered such a favourite virtue that the gods have been said to disguise themselves to test human hospitality. The Bible and tradition seem to agree on this matter. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2). Zeus, "*the stranger's god*," suggests another title for Jehovah. "The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless." Ps. x. 14, 17, 18; cf. Jer. xlix. 11; Hos. xiv. 3.

**II. Israelites themselves have been strangers.** "For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Legislation has protected the orphan and the widow, but not always strangers. They have been considered outcasts and foreigners. Israel had been afflicted and distressed. They knew the bitter experience of persecution, and should therefore sympathise with others in the same condition. Our experience should teach us to regard tenderly all reduced to slavery and treated with inhumanity. "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart (the *soul*, the feeling) of a stranger (by personal experience), seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. xxiii. 9). If Cicero could say whatever concerned humanity was not foreign to himself, what should be our feelings, when we think of the Divine Nature, the pathetic appeals of the Word, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ? "The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xix. 34).

Jove's special care  
Are strangers, poor and friendless.—*Odys.*

A NATION'S HONOUR.—*Verses 20, 21.*

Moses returns to his main subject, and again exhorts to reverence and obedience. God had honoured them, and deserved to be honoured by them. He was worthy in Himself, and worthy on account of what He had done. "He is thy praise and He is thy God—a nation's honour consists in God's blessing upon its past history and its present condition.

**I. God in its past history.** God is in history at all times, over-ruling all events for the accomplishment of His purpose. But few nations were blessed as Israel. 1. *In its constant prosperity* (ver. 22.) Mighty had been the increase of the people. In number, position, and dignity they were like the stars as heaven. 2. *In its continual defence.* In their deliverance and history "great and terrible things" had been done for them. England should remember her deliverances and defence in the destruction of the *Invincible Armada*, the defeat of Popish plots, and the establishment of the Protestant religion. "What one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for Thy land, before Thy people, which Thou redeemedst to Thee from Egypt, from the nations and their Gods?" (2 Sam. vii. 23.)

**II. God in its present condition.** He must still be our God, as well as our father's God. He must never be forgotten nor forsaken, but abide with us for ever. 1. *As the object of worship.* "He is thy praise," the object of praise, and regard. We must not worship our great men, nor bow down to our own nets (Heb. i. 16). If God be not recognised in public act and private life, our glory will depart. 2. *As the ground of dependence.* We must put no confidence in the wisdom of our policy, the extent of our empire, the splendour of our arms, and the abundance of our wealth. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." 3. *As the source of prosperity.* Our own skill and wisdom are vain. We can never do without God. He gives increase and success in families, churches, and nations (Acts v. 38, 39). To God we owe everything, and should dedicate everything. "Well may we think our substance due where we owe ourselves" (*Bp. Hall*). Let us cleave to God, our shield in the past and our hope for the future. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you" (1 Sam. xii. 24).

"Without the help of God  
All is decay, delusion all,  
On which mankind rely:  
The firmament itself would fall,  
And even Nature die  
Beneath annihilation's nod,  
Without the help of God."—*W. Hayley.*

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 19. Love the stranger.** 1. An expression of God's nature. God is love. 2. An evidence of superior legislation in Israel. 3. A duty enjoined upon us. It is *love*; not mere pity, but practical benevolence. "Never anything can be amiss, when simple-

ness and duty tender it" (*Shakespeare*).  
"A kind action is never lost."

**Ver. 20. Four aspects of obedience.** Fear, serve, cleave, and swear. Our allegiance must be public, constant and firm. If we own God as our own God

He will ever defend us. "Every one that sweareth by Him shall glory."

Ver. 21. *Thy praise.* Thy praised one (Ps. xviii. 3), or thy praiseworthy one. He is also thy chief glory and praise among all nations, who shall admire thy happiness in such a God (*Trapp*). The friendship of God a

personal honour—a constant necessity and an eternal sufficiency. Why be ashamed or afraid of Him? Why not fear Him who can increase or diminish (ver. 22), exalt or humble by His infinite power? "Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings" (Dan. ii. 47).

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER X.

Vers 1-5. *Tables.* God wrote the laws upon stone, and these stones were laid up in the ark of the testimony. But this law He writes now upon the hearts of His people; and God's will, engraved upon the sensitive and susceptible heart of a Christian, will outlast the Pyramids of Egypt, outlive the stones that came down from Mount Sinai in the hand of Moses, and endure for ever. It is a nobler thing to write the law upon human hearts, and more miraculous, than to write it with His own finger upon the dead and perishing stone.—*Dr. Cumming*.

Vers. 6-8. *Ministered.* A pious lady once amongst a party of gentlemen, by whom the worldly circumstances of ministers were made the topic of conversation, remarks were thrown out of which she could not approve. For some time silent, at last, with a dignified air and a decided tone, she put them all to silence with the words, "Well, you may say what you please concerning the situation of ministers, but let me tell you that a minister of the *Gospel* holds a more honourable office than a minister of *state*."—*Whitecross*.

Vers. 12, 13. *Love.* The centripetal force which keeps all the celestial

bodies in harmonious motion, each in its appointed orbit. What would ensue could we imagine the force to be withdrawn?—*Bowes*.

Vers. 14-17. *A great God.* Simo- nides, the philosopher, being requested to describe God, asked a week to think of it, after that a month, and then a year; but, being still unprepared, he declined the task, declaring that the more he thought of such a Being the less he was able to describe Him. It is said that Sir I. Newton and Dr. S. Clarke never mentioned the name of God without solemn pause. "God has two thrones—one in the highest heavens, the other in the lowest hearts" (Is. lvii. 15).

Ver. 19. *Love the stranger.* *Mercy* hath but its name for misery, and is no other thing than to lay another's misery to heart (*Binning*). In aspiring to the throne of power, the angels transgressed and fell; in presuming to come within the oracle of knowledge, man transgressed and fell; but in the pursuit towards the similitude of God's goodness and love neither man nor spirit ever transgressed or shall transgress (*Bacon*). How unsuitable is it for us, who live only by kindness (Tit. iii. 4-7), to be unkind.—*Edwards*.

### CHAPTER XI.

CRITICAL NOTES.—1-12 develop more fully the other features of Divine Requirements, chap. x. 12. Love must be seen in perpetual observance of commands. *Keep*, Lev. viii. 35; Num. i. 53.



2. Know own, *i.e.*, ponder and lay to heart *the chastisement*, the mighty acts of God to Egypt and to Israel; the purpose of which is to *educate* (discipline) by correction and instruction, *cf.* lxx., with the word in Prov. i. 2; v. 12.

3-6 Instances given of discipline.

4. Waters *Of* chap iv. 34; Ex. xiv. 26 *sqq.*

5. All acts in guidance and protection of Israel and punishment of enemies.

6. Destruction of Korah's company specially given, *cf.* Num. xvi. 31-33. "Moses only mentions Dathan and Abiram, followers of Korah, and not Korah himself, probably from regard to his sons, who were not swallowed up by the earth with their father, but had lived to perpetuate the family." (*Keil*.) Dathan and Abiram also were more determined and audacious against Moses. All substance, *lit.* everything existing, Gen. vii. 4, which was in their following (at their feet) *cf.* Ex. xi. 8; Num. xvi. 32.

7. The reason for admonition, *cf.* ver. 2. Know God's purpose in the acts you have seen.

8, 9. This knowledge was to impel them to keep the law, that they might be spiritually strong, enter the land and live long in it. *cf.* chap. iv. 26; vi. 3.

10-12. Another motive for fidelity is added, *viz.*, the entire dependence of the Promised Land upon God for its fertility. Its richness was not like Egypt, the reward of human skill and labour but entirely the gift of God. Egypt and Canaan are distinguished in their most remarkable physical traits, the spiritual significance of which must not be overlooked. (*cf. Speaker's Commentary.*)

10. Wateredst. in two ways, *viz.*, by means of tread-wheels, working sets of pumps, and by means of artificial channels connected with reservoirs, and opened, turned, or closed by the feet. Both methods are still in use in Egypt and other similar districts of the country. (*Speaker's Commentary.*)

11. Hills mountainous. *Drinketh*, *i.e.* received its watering, the main condition of all fertility, from the rain and therefore the providence of God. (*Keil*.)

12. Careth for, *lit.* seeketh or inquireth after, *i.e.* for which God cared. Prov. xxxi. 13; Job iii. 4. LXX. *Oversees*. Ps. cxlii. 4; Is. lxii. 12; Jer. xxx. 17. *Eyes* ever under the special keeping of God.

13. Thus dependent, it behoved them to fear and obey, that these blessings might continue.

14. First autumn rain, about time of sowing from October to December, *latter* spring rains in March or April, which prepares ground for harvest. This rain would be given with plentiful supply of food for man and beast.

15. If Israel would be faithful.

16-17. If not obedient, God's anger would burn against them, heaven would shut up ("as a womb," Gen. xvi. 2), earth would yield no produce, and they would speedily perish, Lev. xxvi. 19, 20; Deut. xxviii. 23.

18-20. Almost a verbal repetition of chap. vi. 6-9, to impress the mind.

21. Above, *i.e.* as long as heaven continues above earth, or to all eternity, *cf.* Ps. lxxxix. 30; Job xiv. 12. "The promise of Canaan to Israel then was a *perpetual* promise, but also a *conditiona* one."

23. If faithful, God would drive out all nations. *Greater*, chap. vii. 1; ix. 1.

24. Give them the land in its length and breadth, *every place* within the land. Full possession in the time of Solomon.

25. So fill Canaanites with fear, that none could stand before them.

26-28. Concluding summary. *Shalt put*, *lit.*, give forth, utter, proclaim upon Mount Gerizim, the most southern of the two, and according to Jewish ideas, the region of light, life, and blessing (*cf. Speaker's Commentary.*) *Ebal* on the north side, opposite Gerizim (*cf. Stanley. Sinai and Palestine.*)

31-32. Contain a reason for the instructions and an assurance that if they observe to do, they shall cross Jordan, enter and possess the land, chap. iv. 5, 6.

DIVINE DISCIPLINE IN HUMAN LIFE.—*Vers. 1-9.*

God frequently repeated His commands, to meet the child-like character and condition of Israel, and to check their proneness to forget and rebel. Love to God was to show itself in distinct perception and perpetual obedience to His statutes. To awaken this love they must trace God's dealings with them, and realise that these dealings were "chastisement," discipline to train them in His service.

**I. Divine discipline displayed in various ways.** "All the great acts" which God performed have a bright and a dark side—were filled with mercy or judgment according to the moral condition of the spectator. 1. *In acts of love to God's people.* The miracles of deliverance, guidance, and defence were intended to wean from sin and awaken right feeling. Their afflictions were corrections, less than their rebellion deserved, which taught them to pray and depend upon God. The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor Christians perfected without adversity. 2. *In acts of judgment to God's enemies.* The "mighty hand" destroyed Israel's foes and chastised the oppressor. Proofs of God's power and purpose were seen on every hand. The overthrow of pride and the defence of the weak; the bestowment of good and the infliction of evil were a process of education. God was seen the friend of His people, and the judge of His enemies; training by peculiar discipline, and warning by solemn visitations. Thus life is a school. The great events of life are appointed and directed by God to train us for service.

There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will.

**II. Divine discipline to be recognised in the events of life.** "Know ye this day." Men are unable, unwilling to learn. Life to them is ordinary, accidental, or without value. We must take note, ponder this truth, and discern God's purpose in our life. If we could see "the end of the Lord" in His dealings with us and others, we should murmur less, and be more thankful and resigned. We quench "the light of life" by our "theory of life." It is not the want of greater miracles, but of perception of spiritual insight, that leads us to forget God and misinterpret His providence. Wherever the hand of God is, *there* is miracle and meaning if we desire to learn. All processes of life point to mental and moral development. It is our wisdom, our interest to believe and co-operate. "I would rather do the will of God than work miracles," said Luther. "Consider (*i.e.*, carefully regard) the work of God" (Ecc. vii. 13). "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord" (Ps. cvii. 43).

**III. The recognition of this Divine discipline in life to be shown in cheerful obedience.**—Because "your eyes have seen" the mighty acts of God and the design for which they were done. "Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments" (verse 8). The older generation had witnessed more than others, enjoyed greater advantages, and were therefore put under deeper obligation. Those who have seen signal events, who live in remarkable times, times of revival, judgments, and deliverances, are more indebted to God and doubly guilty in their disobedience. Duty must be measured by privilege. The lessons of our life must be taught to others, and embodied in our character and conduct. If unfaithful and indifferent how great will be our punishment. Exalted to heaven, we may be cast down to hell!

IV. The consequences of this obedience are manifold. If Israel would hear, rightly interpret, and obey the voice of God in the events of their history, the results would be manifold. 1. *Spiritual strength*. "That ye may be strong" (verse 8). As we gain strength naturally by walking, so spiritually we become strong by obedience. God is the source of all power, and by dependence upon Him that power is ours. Unbelief is infirmity; joyful trust gives strength for work and welfare. 2. *Possession of Canaan*. "And possess the land." Earthly possessions and distinctions are reserved for those who are trained for them. Strength derived from obedience inspires with courage to gain new dominions. Those strong in the Lord are resistless, and drive before them nations greater and mightier than they. 3. *Length of life*. "That ye may prolong your days." Long life to individuals or nations, the perpetuation of the Church or a godly seed, depend upon God more than natural causes. Disobedience in its nature and in the judgments of God upon it, brings to untimely ends. Obedience contributes to the length and the enjoyment of life. "The fear of the Lord longeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."

#### THE OVERTHROW OF CONSPIRATORS.—Verse 6.

This is specially mentioned as one instance of those "acts" which had been done to warn and instruct. The words may be compared with Num. xvi., and the following outline will be suggested. 1. *The sin of the conspirators*. Korah sought not to abolish the distinction between Levites and the people; but to secure the chief dignity for himself. They rebelled against Moses (Num. xvi. 2, 3); refused the text proposed (6 and 7); refused to leave their tents (verse 2), and reproached Moses as if responsible for their protracted sojourn in the wilderness. "Ambition o'erleaps itself." The fate of Nadab and Abihu should have warned them. "God hath a special indignation at pride above all sins," says Bp. Hall. "A man's pride shall bring him low (cf. Prov. xxix. 23; xi. 2; xvii. 19). 2. *The overthrow of the conspirators*. Opposition to God's authority is highly displeasing, when determined and open. The destruction was: 1. Sudden. "The earth opened." 2. Supernatural. This not in a country undermined with subterranean fire, but in the sandy desert; where earthquakes seldom happen, and are little expected. 3. Complete. "Swallowed them up and their households, tents, and all possessions." 4. Admonitory. "In the midst of all Israel." It vindicated the rights of Moses, and is a warning for all ages. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change; for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" (Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *Not seen*. He speaks to them as to eye-witnesses, and those that have such evidence and self-experience are usually more affected than those that have things by hear-say only. "Mine eye affects my heart." (Lam. iii. 51.)—*Trapp*.

power, acts of publicity, yet unable to convert the soul.

Ver. 5. *Did to you*. A personal diary, to help our weak memory and stir up our cold hearts. "Forget not all His benefits."

Ver. 6. *His miracles*. Acts of hunters in their object, method and



punishment. Their history illustrative of the *perils of bad company*. "Unity with wicked companions is one of the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation both of sin and punishment." — (*Sibbs*.) "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces." (Is. viii. 9; cf. Prov. xi. 21; Josh. ix. 1, 2.)

Vers. 3-9. 1. God has a people among men. 2. He separates this people from men in various ways. 3. He unites them in bonds of fellowship. 4. He trains them to love Him. 5. He guides them to rest.

Vers. 4-6. *Nature subservient to God's purposes*. 1. In the destruction of His enemies. 2. In the deliverance of His people. "It was a marvel that the waters opened; it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less marvel that the earth opened, but more marvel that it shut again, because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease." — (*Bp. Hall*.) All the elements of nature under God's control, hence the folly of offending one who can easily and awfully punish.

#### EGYPT AND CANAAN.—Verses 10-12.

Moses adduces another motive for obedience to God's law founded upon the peculiar nature of the land. It was "a land flowing with milk and honey;" yet its richness was not, as was that of Egypt, the reward of human skill, but simply and entirely the gift of God, and resulted from the rain of heaven. Hence on account of dependence upon God they should not forget Him. The two countries are—1. *A proof of natural variety*. In Egypt there was little or no rain, the people depended upon the yearly overflow of the Nile. Its waters were stored up by artificial means and its fields irrigated by human toil. Canaan was a land of hills and natural reservoirs. It was watered by rains from heaven and depended not on the toil and skill of man to fertilise it. In physical beauty and natural products, in situation and configuration, territories differ and display the wisdom and benevolence of God. 2. *An indication of moral purpose*. Some countries are more suited than others to train a people. God has located nations and fixed the habitation of individuals that they might seek and serve Him (Acts xvii. 26-27). Canaan seems in every sense best suited to foster dependence upon God and train Israel for their high destiny. Hence in natural scenery, in the structure of the hill and the extent of the valley; in the course of the river and the climate of the sky, we have proof of Divine goodness and elements for religious training. 3. *An illustration of special providence*. God was in Egypt in every place. But Canaan was a land on which Jehovah fixed his special attention and regard. He watched it with unceasing care, and sustained it by constant favour. He gave early rain for seed time, and latter rain for harvest. Its inhabitants had no need to slave like Egyptians. Fidelity to God would always secure their prosperity and happiness. Thus do we find moral purpose, wonderful providence in natural surroundings, and the forces of nature employed in spiritual training.

\* Read Nature; Nature is a friend to truth;  
Nature is Christian, preaches to mankind;  
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed."—*Young*.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MORAL CHARACTER AND MATERIAL PROSPERITY.— Verses 10-17.

If Israel would serve God and be faithful, He would give them plentiful supplies for man and beast. But, on the other hand, if they turned away from Him, He would withhold the rain, deprive them of harvest, and they would utterly perish. Material blessings depended upon moral conduct.

I. There is a moral purpose in the bestowment of material prosperity.—God in bestowing physical good designs the moral training of men. Rain from heaven and fruitful seasons testify to His goodness, and should excite to gratitude (Acts xiv. 17). The greater the blessing the higher is the end in view. Canaan was given to Israel for a special purpose. The blessings of this land and of all lands are too uniform to spring from chance; too rich and manifold for human labour to produce, and too wisely adapted to human wants to be given without moral purpose.

II. The continuation of material prosperity depends upon moral conduct.—The sources of prosperity are under the control of the Creator. He can seal the earth and shut up the heavens. The influence of imperial power and the excellency of legislation can neither create a sunbeam nor command a shower. Happiness, all kinds of prosperity, would accrue to the Israelites by a faithful observance of the commands of God, but terrible were the punishments which awaited them if they transgressed (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 3-17; Am. iv. 7).

III. Material prosperity will affect moral character for good or evil. If it teaches dependence upon God, creates gratitude, and leads to consecration to Him, it will be a blessing; but if it weans our hearts from Him, leads to proud self-reliance, it will be a curse to us. "Take heed" (verse 16). "According to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 16).

## THE BIBLE THE FAMILY BOOK.—Verses 18-21.

These words of warning must be deeply impressed upon their own minds, taught to their children, and perpetuated from one generation to another. They are partly a verbal repetition of chap. vi. 6-9. The sense is, "Keep the covenant faithfully, and so shall your own and your children's days be multiplied as long as the heaven covers the earth."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

I. The words to be treasured up in the heart. "Lay up these words in your heart." If we forget the words, we shall neglect the things. There must be personal reception, esteem, and influence. We must weigh them over, ponder them in our hearts. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart."

II. The words to be taught to posterity. "Ye shall teach them your children." What we love and treasure up for ourselves must be communicated to others. Children have the first claim. Parental responsibility can never be shifted on to the Sunday school or schoolmaster. The words of God must be elements of family instruction. "The home school" must be gathered together, trained, and made an institution to preserve and spread true religion. A large portion of the Bible is intelligible to children, and full of interest for them. Read the Family Bible and engage in family prayer. "Train up (*lit., imitate, dedicate,*

as house (Num. vii. 10, 11;) or temple (1 King viii. 63), a child in the way (his way) he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.)

III. The words to result in open profession by the household. They are to be written on doorposts and gates to be constantly before the eyes of others. The whole family or household are interested, indoctrinated and collectively identified with public profession. The preservation of religion and the welfare of the community demand "a church in the house." "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law."

#### THE FOUR PLACES IN WHICH A GOOD MAN KEEPS GOD'S TRUTH.—Verse 18.

I. *The first place is the heart.* The heart furnishes metal for the mind. 1. Lay them up like treasure in a chest; for the words of God are the family plate of believers—the heirlooms of the household of faith. 2. Like books in a library ready for reference. 3. Like clothes in a wardrobe ready for all weathers; for summer's sunshine and winter's storms. The truth of God should be the garment of the soul. 4. Like conserves of precious fruit, gathered in the time of plenty, to be eaten in time of scarcity. 5. Like knowledge hidden but not lost. 6. As guides. It is useful to have a map to consult if we desire to know a country; so these words are for meditation and use. 7. In the heart not like misers' hoards, but like bankers' gold, wealth itself, and the means of creating more.

II. *The second place in which we are to lay up these words is in heart and soul.* Religion should have a place in our affections and in our thoughts. 1. For the soul is the seat of thought or understanding. Some do not think and attempt not to understand. 2. The soul is the seat and place of the mind life. 3. The soul is the seat of conviction, and conviction is mental activity and independence.

III. Now the relations of the text change, and this third head brings us to the second department. The word revealed in the heart and soul refers to moral and mental power of man. In this third particular religion is brought into notice; "*therefore shall ye bind these words for a sign upon your hand.*" As much as to say, realise them in your life. If you have any religion, use it. Christians should carry their light like the old blind man, who always carried a bright lantern when he went out on dark nights. When laughed at and called a foolish old fellow, "Oh," said he, "I carry it to prevent people stumbling over me." Bind these words, 1. Like a glove on the hand for defence. It would be fearful for the hedger and ditcher to grapple prickly thorns with his ungloved hand. 2. A sign on the hand like a gauntlet. These words are signs of the side on which we stand, and the conflict we intend to wage. 3. For a sign, like a tool in the hand; something to work, to build with. 4. For a sign like a sword in the hand. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." Remarkable have been the encounters in which this sword has been wielded with power. None more remarkable than the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness.

IV. *There is yet a fourth place, where the good man keeps God's truth.* That they may be as frontlets between the eyes. The Jews forgot the spirit, and gave a literal interpretation to the words. They must be before us. We must profess, avow the words. 1. The words are to be a source of pride, for what is worn on the head, is a thing we are proud of. Be proud not of yourself, of



your attainments, but of that which has conferred upon you the possession of these words. 2. As frontlets, giving dignity, ornament, rank, and elevation—an ornament of grace about the head, chains of gold about the neck, wreathed into a coronet, diadem and crown. 3. As frontlets a source of protection. Wear them as helmets are worn. “For a helmet the hope of Salvation.” These are principles of a religious life, the principles which the great Hebrew law-giver beheld as lying at the foundation of all prosperous states and all truly noble personal character.—*The Preacher’s Lantern*, Vol. II.

THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH.—*Verse 21.*

I. When may our days be said to be “as the days of heaven upon the earth?” When—1. We enjoy much of a sense of the Divine presence, and live in the contemplation of the glorious perfections of God. 2. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. 3. We enjoy a spirit of gratitude and praise. 4. We possess brotherly love and enjoy the happiness of fellowship with the saints. 5. We obtain great victories over sin and have intense love of purity. 6. We cheerfully obey God’s commands. 7. We frequently meditate on the heavenly state.

II. What course should we take in order that our days may be as such? We must—1. Be partakers of vital faith in Christ, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. 2. Make the glory of God our highest aim. 3. Wean our hearts from earthly things. 4. Watch against grieving the Holy Spirit. 5. Be perpetually employed for God, and resign our wills to His.—*Dr. Ryland*.

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10-12. *The distinguished honour of Canaan.* 1. Its great natural beauties. 2. Its special guardianship by Jehovah. “Careth for”—In its preparation for the people, its wonderful products and various seasons.

Vers. 13-15. *Rain.* 1. In its *origin*. “I will give you the rain.” Not therefore from fixed laws, nor from idols. Jupiter could not create dark clouds and distil them in blessings. “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” 2. In its *effects*. “Corn, wine, and oil.” Crops ripen for the sickle. The vine with its clusters, and grass for cattle in due season. All benefactions of God. 3. In its *continuance*. “It tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” It depends upon the power and goodness of God; withheld or bestowed in times and quantities according to the conduct of the people (Joel, ii. 23; Zech. x. i; Deut. xxviii. 12). “How easy were it for God to starve us all by denying us a harvest or two.”—*Trapp*.

Ver. 16. *A caution against deception.* We notice here—I. An evil anticipation—that of having the heart deceived. The probability of such deception may be inferred from the deceitfulness: (1.) Of human knowledge. (2.) The heart. (3.) Sin. (4.) The world. (5.) The devil. II. a caution urged against it: “Take heed to yourselves,” by (1.) Being sensible of your extreme danger. (2.) Seeking for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. (3.) The constant practice of self-examination. (4.) Watching over yourselves.—*Biblical Museum*.

Ver. 17. I. *Dreadful evils.* 1. The Lord’s wrath kindled. 2. Heaven shut up. “The keys of heaven, of the heart, of the womb, and of the grave, God keeps and carries under His own girdle” (*Trapp*). II. *How brought on.* By disobedience, self-deception, and idolatry, ver. 16; cf. Josh. xxiii. 16; Jer. xvii. 9; Job xxxi. 27.

Vers. 18-21. *The Bible the rule of*

*human life.* I. Its power over private life. 1. In the heart, governing feeling and affection. 2. In the soul, controlling thought and meditations. II. Its power over public life. Before the eyes to direct; in the hand prompting to action and service; confessed in the family; and avowed before the world, in conversation by the way, and inscription on the gates, etc. "A single book has saved me," said M. L. Bautin, but that book is not of human origin."—"It is this belief (in the Bible), the fruits of deep meditation, which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life. I have found it a capital safely invested and richly productive of interest, although I have

sometimes made but a bad use of it" (*Goethe*).

He alone who hath  
The Bible need not stray;  
Yet he who hath and will not give  
That light of life to all who live,  
Himself shall lose the way.

*J. Montgomery.*

*The benefits of obedience.* 1. in bracing up, engaging, and cultivating all the powers of heart and mind. 2. In testifying for God in the family and before the world. 3. In securing personal advantage, national existence and permanent possessions. These lessons should we remember "Write them upon the door." "Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (*Hab. ii. 2*).

#### LOYAL OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY.—*Verses 22–25.*

To secure God's help in gaining and keeping the land it was needful to obey him. Obedience would introduce them into their inheritance, enlarge their boundaries, and make them valiant over every foe.

**I. The national advantages secured.** Many great promises are given. 1. *Conquest of enemies.* "Then will the Lord drive out all these nations." The strongest foes, mightier and greater than ourselves will be subdued if we trust in God. With him we can drive away rebels within or foes without our borders. Gideon over the Medianites, Hezekiah over Sennacherib, and England over the Armada were victorious through God. 2. *Enlargement of territory.* When nations were driven out of Canaan, Israel would grow numerous, and spread beyond it. Every place on which the soles of their feet should tread would be their own. Territories are not gained and kept by war, alliance of commerce, and human might. They are the gift of God, for the welfare of which the possessors are responsible. 3. *Security of possession.* It is one thing to get and another to keep. Nations have gained and lost their dominions. Reliance upon God is better than valiant soldiers and mighty ships. 4. *Moral supremacy.* God would lay the dread of Israel upon others. Nations would be afraid, be unable to touch them if they loved him. Their conquest would be easy, and their possession secure and permanent. Moral power is better than military power. Righteousness exalts a nation, gives more influence than imperial armies and extensive wealth. Let nations covet this, let Christian churches be clad with this; then no enemy will dare to attack, and no traitor within can weaken. "Salvation will God appoint for wall and bulwarks."

**II The method of securing the advantages.** Nations form alliances—co-operate in aggressive war to gain their ends. How different the principles of the Mosaic legislation. In itself, Israel was a match for no warlike nation; in loyalty to God it was superior to all. "Only diligently keep all these commandments," and then would they rise in material prosperity and moral grandeur. 1. *Diligent obedience.* "Diligently keep." Excellence, individual or national, is beyond the reach of indolence. It is diligent, energetic obedience to right that makes rich in self-culture, social influence and national progress. 2. *Heartly obedience.* The affections must be enlisted; no mechanical, slavish

service. "I love the service of my God; like the bird, I fly at liberty on the wings of obedience to His holy will" (*Dr. Chalmers*). "Love the Lord your God." 3. *Constant obedience*. "Cleave unto Him." We must be united—cemented to Him in soul, mind, and strength; never be dissolved by selfishness or distrust. This therefore is the way to prosperity in nations and churches. Cleave to right, rely upon God, and He will give valiant hearts, speed true progress and elevate above danger. But "the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

## FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE THE WAY OF PROGRESS AND SAFETY.

I. This is a declaration of God's will. It is not taught by politicians or learned in schools of philosophy. Divine counsels excel human laws. In the Bible we are taught that the fear of God is the surest foundation of social happiness and public security.

II. This is a fact in Christian experience. We know by experience that we can only go forward in knowledge and holiness—only conquer temptations and sins by faithful reliance upon God and constant obedience to His commands. The history of Israel and of all nations confirms the truth. When God has been forsaken and His authority defied, the bonds of society have been broken, thrones have been shaken, and empires rift asunder.

III. This is a law of Christian effort. Without strength there can be no effort, and without obedience there can be no strength. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." In benevolent aims and evangelistic works, we only succeed and reap the fruits of our labour by walking "in all His ways." Be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you saith the Lord of Hosts."

## THE IMPORTANT CHOICE.—*Verses 26-30.*

Moses now shows that a blessing or a curse depends upon their conduct. If they obey a blessing will rest upon them: if they disobey a curse. From the frowning peaks of Ebal or the sunny sides of Gerizim their condition will be decided. Before they enter the land the choice must be made. Which shall it be?

I. The choice to be made. Carefully examine the words and discover. 1. *It is plainly revealed*. We cannot obey a rule we do not understand. There may be mysteries in the Bible, but there is no mystery about the commandments. Duties are plain and easily understood. "I set before you." 2. *It is practicable*. A law whose demands are impossible is a contradiction. God's commands are all practicable. But we must judge them not by infirmities of the flesh, but the attainments of saints, the energy of grace and the power of God. 3. *It is voluntary*. Force makes hypocrites, never any genuine Christians. Obedience must be free. There must be no constraint in this choice. 4. *It is urgent*. "This day." It must be done. The more difficult will it be the longer the delay. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

II. The reasons for decision. There is no reason, no excuse whatever for indecision. 1. *God demands decision*. All His claims are reasonable. He is supreme and should be obeyed; good, perfectly good in Himself and the author of all good in others. "If the Lord be God follow Him!" 2. *Indecision is*



*most mischievous.* If obedience be profitable, if God's service conduces to happiness, then indecision is unprofitable and mischievous. (a) *Mischievous in its nature.* It withholds from God the gratitude and service which are due to him. It admits and encourages rivals with God, and therefore implies rebellion and treason. (b) *Mischievous in its tendency.* Wicked men may be blind to their own faults, but they understand what God's servants should be; speak reproachfully of them and become hardened in their sins through mere pretensions in religion. (c) *Mischievous in its effects.* It pays some compliment to religion and begets hope which is delusive. Those who are not obedient, entirely decided for God on earth, will be disowned in a future state. 3. *Indecision is most foolish.* It is not acceptable to God, but exposes to his censure and wrath, to the upbraidings of conscience and the danger of hell. Consider these things and decide. "See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. (Deut. xxx. 1-15.)

#### THE SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE.—Verses 26-30.

**I. The things to be chosen.** Life or death, God or sin, heaven or hell. Not education, trade or profession; but a much more solemn and momentous choice. The gospel offers life and death. One must be chosen. There is no alternative whatever.

**II. The medium through which they are given.** Two mountains were selected from which the announcement was to go forth in solemn ceremony, and "as it were transfer them to the land to be apportioned to its inhabitants according to their attitude towards the Lord their God."—(Keil.) cf. chap. xxvii. 14. Learn from this. 1. That nature may remind of God in its blessing or curse, fruitfulness or barrenness. 2. That nature may be affected by the moral character and moral conduct of a population. 3. That nature may warn men, co-operate with God, and be helpful to His cause.

**III. The consequences involved in the choice.** 1. God served or refused and thus insulted or honoured. 2. The people blessed or cursed. How miserable is life spent under the dominion of guilt, the curse of God and the fear of torment! How happy and glorious is life devoted to God and His service! "Happy while on earth you live, mightier joys ordained to know."

#### THE LAND OF PROMISE.—Verses 31, 32.

Its physical features have been described. Palestine was always coveted by surrounding nations for its excellence and beauty, its products and position. It thus becomes a type of the inheritance reserved for the righteous.

**I. The nature of its enjoyments.** The land was gloriously privileged by its exemption from evil, and its enjoyment of good. 1. *Perfect security.* Victory over enemies was complete, and God's people are ever under His protection. "It stands securely high, indissolubly sure." 2. *Undisturbed rest.* "Dwell therein." Conflict and toil over; unbroken, and eternal peace enjoyed. "My chief conception of heaven is perfect rest" said Robt. Hall. The "Saints' everlasting rest." 3. *Everlasting joy.* In the presence, friendship, and service of God. There we "shall ever be with the Lord."

"O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!  
Full without measure! lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss,"—(Young.)

II. The method of its possession. This is distinctly revealed. 1. *By faith in the Leader.* Israel had to "observe to do all the statutes." Our daily life must be a walk with God and keeping His commandments. 2. *By crossing Jordan.* "Ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land." It is "the home beyond," and the river cannot be avoided. "There was no bridge to go over, and the river was very deep," says Bunyan. But God can divide the waters and give a safe passage. 3. *By receiving it as a gratuity.* "Which the Lord your God giveth you." We cannot buy this inheritance. It is the land of promise, and will be given to all who believe and seek it in Christ. He is "the way" to heaven, "the truth" to direct in the way, and "the life" to help us in walking in it when found. (John xiv. 6.)

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 22, 23. 1. *The service commanded.* Man made to serve and can only be happy in loyal obedience to God. This service should be diligent, loving, active and constant. 2. *The rewards bestowed.* Subjugation of nations and secure possessions of the land. *Walk in all His ways.* As God requires in conformity to His word. *Without delay.* (Job xxii. 21; Ps. cxix. 59, 60.) *Courageously,* without fear. (Ps. cxvi. 18, 19; Is. li. 7, 8.) *Peseveringly,* without declension. (Job xxiii. 11, 12; Num. xiv. 24.) *Closely,* with holy fervour and joyful hope.

Vers. 26-28. 1. *What is the blessing set before us?* The blessing of him whose sins are forgiven, who lives in God's favour and dies in peace. The blessing is lost through sin and the way to regain it; but revealed in Christ, made known in scripture and taught, illustrated and explained in every page almost. 2. *What is the curse?* Just this, "The soul that sins shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written, etc." The consequences of sin here and the punishments of sin hereafter. 3. *What is the way to escape the curse?* It is set forth plainly in the Bible—in Christ the way, the truth and the life. By the death of Christ we are delivered from sin, redeemed from the curse, and by His obedience entitled to a blessing. 4. *Which will you choose?* Some

people think they can make a compromise; that they need not be intensely Christian, as they are not, and will not be intensely worldly. If they do so, it is not really an alteration of their state, but a deception of themselves. There is no alternative between a blessing high as the throne of Deity, and a curse deep and terrible as the nethermost hell. You must take the sunshine or the shadow—the evil or the good—the "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom;" or the withering sentence, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire."—*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 32. *The course of life urged.*  
1. Attentive in its object, "observe."  
2. Divine in its origin, "I set before you."  
3. Comprehensive in its demands, "all the statutes and judgments."  
4. Energetic in its nature "to do."  
5. Prompt in its actions, "to-day."  
6. Beneficial in its results, "In matters of great concern, and which must be done; there is no surer argument of a weak mind than irresolution, to be undetermined when the case is so plain and the necessity so urgent. To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it, this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day to another, until he is starved and destroyed."—(*Tillotson.*)

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XI.

**Ver. 2. *Ohastisement.*** Happy is that condition, which forces us to trust only in God, and to be in the hand of His providence. Afflictions dispose us to pray; and we are sure to want nothing if we find God in prayer.—*Bp. Wilson.*

**Ver. 3-5. *His acts.*** To those the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened, and the avenues of their hearts opened, to discern and adore the perfections of God, how manifold are the instances which occur of the providence of God in interfering to direct the course of human events towards a salutary end; to make afflictions of men the bye-path to enjoyment; out of evils temporal and transitory to produce substantial and permanent good.—*Bp. Mant.*

**Vers. 6-7. *Dathan.*** The earth could no longer bear up under the weight of these rebels and ingrates. God's patience was exhausted when they began to assail his servants, for his children are very dear to him, and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.—*Spurgeon.* This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcases of men; but bodies informed with living souls never before. To have seen them struck dead upon the earth had been fearful; but to see the earth at once their executioner and grave, was more horrible.—*Bp. Hall.*

**Vers. 10-15. *Rain.*** Mr. Lothian, an English farmer, who was struck during his journey from Joppa to Jerusalem by not seeing a blade of grass, where even in the poorest localities of Britain some wild vegetation is found, directed his attention particularly to the subject, and pursued the enquiry during a month's residence in Jerusalem, where he learned that a miserably quantity of milk is daily sold to the inhabitants at a dear rate, and that chiefly asses' milk. "Most clearly," says he, "did I perceive that the

barrenness of large portions of the country was owing to the cessation of the early and latter rain, and that the absence of grass and flowers make it no longer the land (v. 9) flowing with milk and honey."—*Crit. and Exper. Com.*

**Vers. 10-17. *Keep my commandments and I will send grass.*** The prosperity of a country depends, not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment and character; here are to be found its true interest, its chief strength, its real power.—*Luther.*

**Ver. 16. *Be not deceived.*** Deceit is only a game played by small minds.—*Corneille.* No real greatness can long co-exist with deceit.—*S. T. Coleridge.*

**Vers. 18-21. *Teach.*** The sacred books of the ancient Persians say—If you would be holy, instruct your children, because all the good acts they perform will be imputed to you.—*Montesquien.* We have a thorough belief that the great secret of training lies in always regarding the child as immortal. The moment we forget this we scheme and arrange as though the child had to live only upon earth and then our plans not being commensurate with the vastness of their object will necessarily be inadequate to secure its good. Educate on the principle that you educate for eternity, otherwise it is impossible to produce a beneficial result.—*Canon Melvill.*

**Ver. 21. *Many days.***

To be is better far than not to be.

*Dr. Sewell.*

This life is the childhood of eternity.

*Archbp. Manning.*

**Ver. 22. *Keep.*** Obedience, promptly,



fully given, is the most beautiful thing that walks on earth.—*Dr. Raleigh*. It is the only satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of our profession.—*Bridges*.

The path of duty is the way to glory.  
*Tennyson.*

Ver. 25. *Stand*. A man in the right, with God on his side, is in the majority, though he be alone, for God is multitudinous above all populations of the earth.—*Beecher*.

Vers. 26–28. *Blessing*. As bliss is happiness in the highest degree, it can only be given by a God, and enjoyed by a saint.—*E. Davies*. *Curses*. They are not merely imprecations, impotent and fruitless desires; they carry

their effects with them, and are attended with all the miseries denounced by God.—*Cruden*. Our actions must clothe us with an immortality loathsome or glorious.—*Colton*.

Ver. 31. *Shall possess*. Possibilities are as infinite as God's power.—*Dr. South*.

Ver. 32. *Do this day*. There is no work on earth easier than the true service of God.—*Luther*. God counts that free service which love dictates, and not necessity.—*St. Augustine*. The carrying on the affairs of the day that lies before us.—*Goethe*.

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,  
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

## CHAPTER XII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Moses now begins an exposition of the principal laws which must govern the people in their ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic life in Canaan. The religious life of Israel is described first. In this chapter a place for God's worship is chosen, and the right method pointed out.

2. Destroy all "places" of idolatry. Hills and elevated spots they imagined were nearer heaven. Green trees and shades of foliage or wood inspired awe.

3. Monuments of idolatry destroyed. Altars, piles of turf, or small stones. Pillars, rude blocks of coloured stone used before the art of sculpture was known. Groves, *lit.* idol, pillars of wood. (*cf.* chap. vii. 5, and xvi. 21.) Names, every trace of existence.

4-5. Not do, as idolaters worship in what place and in what way you think fit. God chose the places and in these places alone did He put His name, *i.e.*, manifest his presence. To these appointed places must they resort (*seek cf.* 2 Chron. 1-5), to offer gifts and sacrifices. The various kinds of which are given "in order to enforce the order that each and every one of them is to be offered at the sanctuary, and nowhere else."

6. *First*, two chief altar offerings. Burnt offerings and sacrifices with which meat offerings and drink offerings were united. (Num. xv. 4.) *Second*, tithes and heave offerings types of field produce and cattle (Lev. xxvii. 30-33; Num. xviii. 21-24), heave offerings, free gifts of love in addition to legal offerings. *Third*, vows and free will offerings, in consequence of vows or spontaneous impulse. (Lev. vii. 16; xii. 21; Num. xv. 3; xxix. 39.) *Fourth*, firstlings of herds and flocks. (*cf.* Ex. xiii. 2; Num. xviii. 5.)

7. Eat, many injunctions had been allowed to lie in abeyance in their migratory condition, now the whole ritual would be obligatory. The sacrificial feast was to accompany certain offerings, put hand, all undertaken or acquired by activity. (*cf.* Gen. iii. 22; Isa. xi. 14.)

8, 9. Reason for these instructions, for up to this time every one had done what he thought right, because they were not in possession of the inheritance.

10, 11. But when settled in the land a certain order and a fixed locality should be determined. Choice vows, *lit.*, the choice of your vows, the vows of your choice, voluntary. (Lev. xxii. 21; Num. 3, 8.)

12. Rejoice. Joy to be the distinctive feature of all sacrificial meals, to be shared by sons and daughters, and by slaves (menservants and maidservants). No part. Levites at *gates*, i.e., in towns and hamlets (Ex. xx. 10) resembled strangers, and had no share in the land as hereditary property. "The repeated injunction to invite the Levites to the sacrificial meals is not at variance with Num. xviii. 21, where the tithes are assigned to the tribe of Levi for their maintenance."—*Keil*.

13, 14. Moses sums up instructions. They must beware of offering sacrifices in every place they thought fit, especially *burnt offering*, the chief offering.

15. In the wilderness animals for food were slain at the door of the tabernacle. (Lev. xvii. 3-6.) This prohibition, designed to gather them round one centre, and to cut off private idolatrous rites, was now to be relaxed. When the people were scattered they might slay at their houses (gates). Lusteth after, not in a bad sense, but means simply to will or choose. According, in proportion to means and condition. Unclean, as no longer consecrated as sacrifices. "The ceremonial distinctions do not apply in such cases, any more than to 'the roebuck' (or gazelle) 'and hart,' animals allowed for food but not for sacrifice."—*Speak. Com.*

16. Blood forbidden to be eaten (Lev. xvii. 10) was poured as water upon the earth and sucked in.

17-19. Sacrificial meals could only be held at the sanctuary. Servants and foreign slaves were to participate with them; the Levites especially were not to be forgotten.

20. These rules were to be in force when God would enlarge their border. If too far off (ver. 21) to come, the allowance in verses 15, 16, is repeated, and the reason of it given. Be sure, (ver. 23) *lit.*, be strong, steadfast, determined to resist temptation to eat blood—a temptation to which they were specially exposed, probably.

23-24. The law relating to blood as in ver. 16.

26. Holy things, tithes, etc., as in ver. 17; not tithes for Levites, but special gifts of thankfulness and piety to be presented as peace offerings at the sanctuary. Vows. (Gen. xxviii. 20.)

27. The flesh and blood of burnt offerings were to be put upon the altar. (Lev. i. 5-9.) The blood of sacrifices in the ritual of the peace offering was poured out. (Lev. iii. 2, 8, 13.) *Eat*. (Lev. vii. 11.)

28. The closing admonition in expansion of ver. 25. (*cf.* chap. xi. 21.)

29-32. A reference to the beginning (ver. 2), and a warning against Canaanitish idolatry. Feed. Be not ensnared by the worship of the local deities, the neglect of which was thought would bring misfortune. (*cf.* 2 Kings xvii. 26.) The fire. The heathens prepare all kinds of abominations for their gods which Jehovah hates. They even burn their children to their idols. (Lev. xviii.; Jer. xxxii. 35.) Observe. This verse is best taken "as an intermediate link, closing what goes before, and introductory to what follows."—*Keil*.

### THE LAWS OF DIVINE WORSHIP.—Verses 1-32.

"Having thus rehearsed the Decalogue and enforced its leading principles, Moses now passes on to apply those principles to the ecclesiastical, civil, and social life of the people. Fourteen chapters are thus occupied. Many particulars are peculiar to the law given in Deuteronomy. The Sinaitic legislation was nearly forty years old, and had been given under conditions of time, place, and circumstances very different. Canaan was in sight, the legislator himself was about to be withdrawn, and in the ripeness of his wisdom he now completes his work by enlarging, explaining, modifying and supplementing under Divine guidance the code which he promulgated in earlier days. Moses fitly begins with regulations pertaining to the worship of the Israelites during their settled life in Canaan" (*cf. Speak. Com.*). Taking the whole chapter, we get the following outline—

I. Worship as a protest to heathen idolatry. The invasion of Canaan was a new period in life—a period of true service and purified character. 1. *Idolatry was not to be imitated* (ver. 29-31). They must shun superstitions, and take

heed not to be ensnared by their prevalence and popularity. 2. *Idolatry was to be destroyed* (ver. 2-4). Its monuments to be overturned, and its places swept away that God might come down and dwell among them.

II. **Worship localised in its position** (ver. 4, 5). God would select a spot to which Israel must resort, institute a worship which should appeal to the senses, and teach the truth that where His people meet there He dwells. (1 Kings 8, 29 ; 2 Chron. 7, 12.)

III. **Worship joyful in its nature** (ver. 7). There was enough in Israel's past and present history to make them joyful. It is God's will that we should serve Him with gladness, and never cover His altar with tears. (Mal. 2, 13.) Religion should never be a task or drudgery, but a pleasure. God commands those who worship Him to be joyful. "Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

IV. **Worship Divine in its regulations.** God only knows and prescribes what is acceptable to Him. We must not follow custom, nor devise for ourselves. In papal ceremonies and the worship of images we have ingenuity "graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17, 29)—"a show of wisdom in *will worship*" (worship arbitrarily invented, devised by self-will, not by God, and which has a reputation of wisdom.) (Col. ii. 23.)

V. **Worship obligatory in its ritual.** There was room for vows, free-will offerings and voluntary efforts ; yet the worship was binding upon all. The command was peremptory. Households and tribes must come to the appointed place (ver. 6). They must bring the kind of offerings specified, and no other. It is our duty to recognise God as our protector (ver. 10) and proprietor. Our attendance in His house should not be matter of form or custom, but of conscience.

Return, my senses, range no more abroad ;  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.—*Parnell*

### THE CHOSEN PLACE.—*Verses 4-6.*

The name of the place is not mentioned by Moses. Different places were chosen in after times, Mizpeh, Shiloh and Jerusalem. "This studied silence was maintained partly lest the Canaanites, within whose territory it lay, might have concentrated their forces to frustrate all hopes of obtaining it ; partly lest the desire of possessing a place of such importance might have become a cause of strife or rivalry amongst the Hebrew tribes, as about the appointment to the priesthood." (Num. xvi.)—*Jamieson*.

I. **An assertion of God's right to every place.** All the earth belongs to God. He has perfect right to appropriate any spot. "The Lord hath chosen Zion ; He hath desired it for His habitation." Now spiritual incense may be offered in every place. (Mal. i 11.) There has been divine order and gradual revelation in the worship of God ; "but the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." The heart, spirit and truth are required more than place. (John iv. 21-24.)

II. **A Dwelling place for God.** "To put His name there." God's name is in every place, where He specially reveals Himself (*cf.* 1 Kings viii. 29), and which is therefore His habitation or dwelling place. The God of heaven will indeed dwell with men upon earth. God is specially present in His house—a place distinguished by His presence—detached from secular pursuits, and



attended by true worshippers—the most solemn and attractive place on earth. “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen. xxviii. 17.)

**III. An aid to unity.** To this chosen place all the tribes were to repair several times a year. The meeting would thus counteract local interests, tribal jealousies, and feuds. Like the Grecian games the festivals would cultivate national feeling and act as a bond of union. They were not merely commemorations of great events, but occasions for the reunion of friends, the enjoyments of hospitality and interchange of kindness. They opened the heart to joy and gave a welcome to the stranger and the fatherless. The Christian Church is a unity of many people, the centre of friendships and joys. “Jerusalem is builded (the well built one) as a city that is compact together (in unity), whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel (*i.e.*, a law or custom to Israel, or a testimony to Israel’s covenant).” (Ps. cxx. 3, 4.)

**IV. A preservative of purity.** “That there should be one national centre for the religion of the people was obviously essential to the great ends of the whole dispensation. Had fanciful varieties of worship such as Polytheism delighted in been tolerated, the Israelites would soon have lapsed into idolatry, and the deposit of the true faith and knowledge of God would have been, humanly speaking hopelessly lost.” (*Speak. Com.*) This holy ground, sanctified by God’s presence and consecrated to His service, demands purity of motive, heart and life. “Feigned holiness is a double evil,” says St. Jerome. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, etc.” (Ps. xxiv. 3–5.)

Look to thy actions well,

For churches either are our heaven or hell.

(*Geo. Herbert.*)

### THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.—*Verses 5, 6.*

It is advantageous individually and socially to meet together in religious worship.

**I. It is a necessity of our moral nature.** As social beings we crave for the society of our fellowmen; as religious creatures we depend upon God and seek His presence. Worship is needful to satisfy our instincts and hearts—to develope our nature and dispositions.

**II. It is a bond of Christian fellowship.** In this hallowed spot dearest friends “meet and mingle into bliss.” Here is delight with the excellent of the earth, sympathy and sweet converse with God and His people. Public prayer and praise have a sensible tendency to unite men together and to cherish and enlarge their generous affections.

**III. It is an advantage to the nation.** The national assembly to Israel was an immense advantage. But for public worship the greater part of mankind would have no instruction—no religion at all. This diffuses knowledge among the people, unites different classes of society and preserves real godliness in the nation.

**IV. It is a duty of Divine appointment.** “Thither shalt thou come, bring burnt offerings and eat” The apostle reproved those who deserted public worship. “Not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as the manner of

some is." (Heb. x. 25.) We are not to forget the command of God, nor dispute the practice of apostolic churches and Christian communities in every age. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."

### THE FUTURE INHERITANCE.—*Verses 9, 10.*

Canaan is here described in a way adapted to the condition of Israel and may typify the future portion of the believer.

**I. The description given.** 1. *A rest*; "the rest." "This is the scene of combat, not of rest." At the end of the journey, will be peace, "quietness and assurance for ever." "My chief conception of heaven is perfect rest," said Robert Hall. 2. *An inheritance* not gained by hereditary succession, merit, or human friendship; but prepared for "the saints in light"—an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away." 3. *A gift*. "The Lord your God giveth you"—a pure, munificent, and unparalled gift in Christ Jesus. Denoting great love, freeness and blessing. 4. *A dwelling*. "So that ye dwell in safety." Beautiful in situation, secure in possessions, "it stands securely high, indissolubly sure." The metropolis of the universe, the abode of saints, the palace of angels, and the residence of the Great King.

O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!  
Full without measure! Lasting beyond bound!  
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss,  
Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,  
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,  
And quite imparadise the realms of light.

**II. The relation to this inheritance indicated.** "Ye are not as yet come to the rest." God's people are seeking it and will attain it. Many come near but do not enter it. Hence all should take warning, be encouraged, and strive to enter it. "It is the best of all blessings," said David Stoner, "to die well, and get safely home to heaven." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 1.** 1. *The duty*. "Observe to do." Weighty and most important. 2. *Method of performing it*. (a) Considerately "observe." (b) Continually "all the days ye live upon earth." "A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent like the Deity."—*J. Webster*.

The path of duty is the way to glory.  
*Tennyson.*

**Vers. 2, 3.** *Destruction of idolatry*. A divine command. A prudent policy. A good example. "We easily fall into idolatry; for we are inclined thereunto by nature, and coming to us by inheritance, it seems pleasant."—*Luther*.

**Ver. 5.** 1. *The place*. The heathen

sought and worshipped gods of nature wherever they could discern any trace of Divinity. 2. *The name*. The name indicates the manifestation of his presence in the place; "presents his personality, as comprehended in the word *Jehovah*, in a visible sign, the tangible sign of his essential presence." (*Keil*.) 3. *The seeking*. Not merely turn in a certain direction; but to inquire for something. Hence come to God's house for a purpose, in anxiety to fulfil that purpose. Not to seek entertainment, for it is not a place of amusement (*Ezek. xxxiii. 22*); nor to attend with worldlimindedness; for it is not the house of merchandise (*Luke xix. 45, 46*). We must not profane it by sinful indulgence and Satan's service (*Jas. i. 21*). Attend with serious

consideration, constant watchfulness and deep concern to obtain God's blessing.

Vers. 7, 12. *Joyful Worship.* This joy springs—1. *From* Divine goodness, past and present. 2. Great numbers, households and tribes. 3. Reciprocal feeling, warm hearts will create joy in prayer and praise and vibrate like chords in harmony. There is a place for song as well as meditation in the sanctuary. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God."

Ver. 9. *Not come to the rest.* No more are any of us indeed, till we come to that "rest which remaineth for the people of God." (Heb. iv. 3, 8-10). The ark was transportive till settled in Solomon's temple; so till we come to heaven are we in continual unrest.—(*Trapp*). Learn: 1. The insufficiency of earthly bliss; both to the believer and unbeliever. 2. The nature of heavenly bliss. Complete, perpetual and certain. Causes of evil and distress removed, and communications of glory beyond description.

### THE SACREDNESS OF BLOOD.—*Verses 16, 20-23.*

The prohibition to use blood is most distinct and often repeated, and that for many reasons.

I. Blood sacred as an article of food. In Pagan and uncivilised nations it was the custom to eat flesh whilst quivering with life and to drink blood mixed with wine, as a right of idolatrous worship. (*cf.* 1 Sam. xiv. 32; Ezek. xxxiii. 25; Acts 15.) But when animal food was granted to man it was forbidden "to eat flesh with its soul, its blood." (Gen. ix. 4.) The body may become food, but the blood, the life of the body which is the gift of God must be treated with reverence and reserved for Him.

II. Blood sacred as an emblem of life. Blood is the seat, the source of life. It contains the vital principle of all animal life, "For it is the life of all flesh," (ver. 14). "Man is man only by virtue of his blood, and nature is chiefly admirable as supplying its ingredients."—(*Grindon*.) Blood is distinguished from all other constituents of the human body. "It is the fountain of life, the first to live and last to die, and the primary seat of the animal soul; it lives and is nourished of itself, and by no other part of the human body."—(*Harvey*.) When the blood is shed the life is gone. Hence, man or beast guilty of this act must be put to death. "Blood of your lives will I require," (Gen. ix. 5; Ex. xxi. 12-28.)

Murder may pass unpunish'd for a time,  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime.—*Dryden*.

III. Blood sacred as an element of expiation. As the blood was identical with the life and represented the soul of the victim, God appointed it as a substitute for the sinner's life. Thus the life of the sacrifice was an atonement for the life of the offerer. It was an established rabbinical maxim that "there is no expiation except by blood," a principle recognised in Heb. ix. 22 "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Let us be thankful that Christ died, and shed His precious blood for us—blood which cleanseth from all sin and "which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Never count the blood of the covenant, by which we are sanctified and saved "an unholy (or common) thing" (Heb. x. 29) and thus insult God and lose your soul!

### DIRECTIONS IN THE CHOICE OF ANIMAL FOOD.—*Verses 15, 16-20-26.*

The instructions concerning food were given to the Israelites in a way most convenient and generally understood at the time. God separated His people



from others and all their laws reminded them of His covenant. Even laws of diet and regulations in the choice of food were given to teach dependence and enforce obedience.

**I. Food in its benevolent design.** Life requires for its maintenance constant supplies of food. Creatures may fast long, but can never dispense with food altogether. We may therefore learn the goodness of God in caring for the body, in providing sufficient and wholesome food, and in the enjoyment and strength which it gives. Since food is necessary we are taught to labour and pray for its continuance. "Give us this day our daily bread." In legislating for our lower nature God teaches what is wholesome and unwholesome—suggests His greater care for our higher wants, food for mind, heart and soul, and reminds us of the care which should exercise over body and soul.

**II. Food in its ceremonial use.** In the garden of Eden vegetables were given to man (Gen. i. 29). Animal food was granted first to Noah (Gen. ix. 25). In patriarchal times food consisted of flesh of animals tame and wild, as well as cereals. In the wilderness supplies came from heaven. In the promised land special rules were given as to kind of animals to be used. (Lev. xi., Deut. xiv.) The Israelites were not to eat animals which were unclean, which were offered to idols (Ex. xxxiv. 15); and which had been torn by wild beasts (Lev. xxii. 8 *cf.* Ezek. iv. 14). All animals for food had formerly to be killed at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. xvi. 1-8), but in view of entrance into the land the prohibition is relaxed. More liberty was given, but the blood of the animal was prohibited to prevent ferocity in men towards lower creatures and profanation of a sacred element. The separation of animals into clean and unclean would remind Israel of their separation from the nations. They were not to join in convivals feasts and social banquets of idolaters. Their ordinary meals must be chosen with care and eaten in gratitude. We must be temperate, orderly and obedient in the government of the table, and exercise control over appetites and desires. Touch nothing unclean, regard the sanctity of life and let thanksgiving be offered with daily food. (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.) "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 16. The prohibition of blood.** To elucidate this ordinance, I shall—  
I. Confirm the fact here stated. God had from the beginning appointed the blood of animals to be offered by man as an atonement for his soul. This appears throughout all the Mosaic history and the New Testament II. Consider the prohibition as founded on it. It was most salutary as tending—  
1. To excite reverence for sacrifices.  
2. To bring continually to remembrance the way of salvation.  
3. To direct attention to the great sacrifice.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

upon God's will. 2. Related to the health of the people. Most of animals forbidden are unclean and unwholesome—others injurious in warm countries. To please the appetite is often prejudicial to health. 3. Designed to promote religious sanctity. We must be separate from all uncleanness; in religious worship and in the common acts of life. "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you."

Here's neither want of appetite no mouths;  
Pray heaven we be not scant of meat or  
mirth.—*Shakespeare.*

Vers. 20-26. *Laws of diet.* 1. Founded

## THE LEVITE.—Verse 19.

This frequently recurring description of the Levites (*cf.* ver. 18, chap. xiv. 27; xvi. 11, 14; xviii. 6; xxvi. 12), does not assume that they were homeless, which would be at variance with the allotment of towns for them to dwell in (Num. xxxv.); but simply implies what is frequently added in explanation "that the Levites had no part nor inheritance," no share of the land as their hereditary property, and in this respect resembled strangers (chap. xiv. 21, 29; xvi. 11). And the repeated injunction to invite the Levites to the sacrificial meals is not at variance with Num. xviii. 21, where the tithes are assigned to the tribe of Levi for their maintenance. For, however ample this revenue may have been according to the law, it was so entirely dependent upon the honesty and conscientiousness of the people that the Levites might very easily be brought into a straitened condition, if indifference toward the Lord and his servants should prevail throughout the nation.—*Keil*.

**I. The Levites, servants of the people.** They were appointed to teach and officiate for Israel before God and thus prevent the anger of God from coming upon the people (*cf.* Num. viii. 18–22.) They were given to the people and depended upon their help and generosity, designed to train them for service and not absolve them from duty. In heathen countries the priestly caste was hereditary, wealthy, and held much of the land (*cf.* Gen. xlvii. 2), but the Levites had no landed property, were servants of God and the people. "Behold I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. xvii. 6).

**II. The Levites, servants of God.** God claimed them as the first-born, separated and cleansed them. They were dedicated to him as Israel's representatives in holy work. They had no worldly portion in houses and land. The avenues to wealth and power were closed to them. God alone was their inheritance in the riches of His grace and the resources of His providence.

## WARNING AGAINST SNARES.—Verses 29–32.

During the sojourn in Egypt Israel became familiar with the customs of idolatry. From this idolatry they were scarcely weaned. Since the forms of licentiousness were worse in the land which they were to inherit, there was need of caution. "Forewarned, forearmed."

**I. The need of warning.** In circumstances most favourable and secure there is need of watchfulness and prayer. 1. *The dangers were great.* "Take heed"—Evils might be vivid, abominable, and cruel, but familiarity would weaken resistance and ensnare. The vices of a companion and of society may be gross and palpable to others, yet (says Shakspeare) "a friendly eye cannot see such faults." 2. *The attractions were strong.* Idol worship was ancient and prevalent. Fashions are often popular and attractive. "Do at Rome what Rome does" is the rule of many. But conscience must be regarded, and the command of God obeyed. 3. *The foe was conquered, not subdued.* Sins may revive, and habits not broken may regain their dominion and tyranny. Men may cease to swear and forsake intemperate ways, and yet be afterwards ensnared. Pity for the enemy, and dependence upon resolves, must not throw us off our guard.

**II. The consequences of neglecting the warning.** There must be no curiosity, no parley, but constant regard to the word of God. 1. *Neglect would offend*

*God.* Idolatry was hateful to God, and if guilty we lose His favour and protection. We must hate what He hates, and assimilate our tastes and habits to His. We shall never err, if we "observe to do" His commandments. 2. *Neglect would bring ruin upon themselves.* Idolatry had been the overthrow of Pharaoh, and the destruction of surrounding nations. It will bring utter ruin to individuals and nations who persist in it. Israel sadly fell by neglecting this caution. (Jer. xxxii. 35; Ezek. xxiii. 37.) "They followed vanity and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them." (2 Kings xvii. 15.)

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 25. *Not eat.*** Who can ever think any commandment of God to be light or little, when this of not eating the blood is charged with so much strictness? The *minutula* of the law, as well as the *magnalia*, must be carefully heeded and practised. — *Trapp.*

**Ver. 29. *Cut off nations.*** God in the history of nations. 1. Appointing their lot. (Josh. xxiii. 4). 2. Robbed of their inheritance. "God shall cut off the nations." 3. Succeeding to their possessions. "Thou succeedest them." 4. Secure in their dwelling "and dwellest in the land." "The life of a nation," says Dr. Arnold, "is to me as distinct as that of an individual." "The Lord is governor among the nations," (Ps. xxii. 28; 1 Chron. xvi. 31.)

**Ver. 31. Idolatry.** 1. Abominable to God. 2. Cruel to humanity. 3. Easily fallen into. "We are inclined thereunto by nature, and

coming to us by inheritance, it seems pleasant."—*Luther.*

**Ver. 31. 1.** The command a rule of duty. "Observe to do it." 2. A complete rule of duty. "Thou shalt not add, nor diminish." *Add* by pretending to have received similar divine revelations and persuading men to believe them, as Mahomet and others; *diminish*, by taking from them, denying them to be from God, and acting contrary to them." From these words it is evident that the Jews were not to add any other rites of worship of their own devising, or from the idolatrous customs of those countries, nor omit any of those which God had commanded them to use. For if they had used any of the Gentile ceremonies, whereby they honoured their gods, it would easily have introduced the worship of the gods themselves; and if they had omitted any of the rites which God had ordained, some other would have easily stepped into their room which were used by idolators."—*Wilson.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XII.

**Vers. 1-4. *Destroy.*** This is a very important law: in this world, unhappily, names are often things; for whenever a party wish to get power, a party holding erroneous doctrines, the first thing they do is to establish titles; and when they have got titles, they soon follow them up by asserting realities. And therefore it is very wisely provided here that not only should the scenes, the altars, and the

groves, all be overturned, as having been desecrated by practices that were abominable in the sight of a holy God, but that even the very names that might remind of that superstition that had passed away should be expunged from their vocabularies, and not mentioned even in their conversation.—*Dr. Cumming.*

**Vers. 5-7. *Place.*** When we re-  
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member what the policy and practice of all the kings of Israel was, viz., to draw off their subjects from the place where God set His name and to deter them from going to Judah and Jerusalem, by means of the calves of Bethel and of Dan . . . it is not possible that Deuteronomy, requiring every Israelite to bring his sacrifice to the place which the Lord should choose to set His name there, should ever have been accepted as genuine and inspired if its genuineness and inspiration had not been incontrovertible (*Bp. Wordsworth*). It is a wise, a salutary, and a laudable provision of the Church's discipline, that she sets apart, and consecrates, by solemn religious rites to God's glory, the places which she intends for His worship; and by outward signs of decency, and reverence of majesty and holiness, impresses them with an appropriate character which, whilst it redounds to the honour of God, operates also with no mean or trivial influence on the minds of His people. A certain sense of holy pleasure is diffused over the pious and meditative mind, as soon as the feet cross the threshold which separates the house of God from common places. We feel that we are on "holy ground;" and a still small voice within, as we draw near to "worship God in the beauty of holiness," "it is good for us to be here."—*Bp. Mant.*

Vers. 17, 18; 20-26. *Eat.* Some people have a foolish way of not minding or pretending not to mind what they eat. For my part, I mind very studiously; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind this, will hardly mind anything else. (*Dr. Johnson.*) Moderation is absolutely required in the lower things of life, especially in that of eating. Health—one of the greatest blessings of life—depends upon it; so also the happy flow of spirits, without which life is at least a perfect blank.—*L. Davies.*

#### Ver. 26. *Vows.*

Unheeded vows may heedfully be broken;  
And he wants wit, that wants resolved will,  
To learn his wit to exchange the bad for  
better.—*Shakespeare.*

Vers. 30-32. *Take heed.* There is a story which tells of a bell suspended on a rock dangerous to navigation. The waves of the ocean beating upon it caused it to make a noise to keep off the approaching mariner. It is said that at one time some pirates destroyed the bell to prevent the warning. Not long after, these very pirates struck upon the rock and were lost. How many hush the voice of warning at the point of danger, and founder upon the rock of temptation and are lost for ever.—*McCosh.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The true modes and forms of worship have been laid down, the next step is to legislate against the authors and abettors of false ones. Such tempters are not to be spared, even though (vers. 1-5) their teaching be confirmed by miracles; or (vers. 6-12) be nearly allied by kindred or friendship; or (vers. 12-19) be supported in their apostacy by a whole city.—*Speak. Com.*

1. **Prophet.** Received communications orally or by vision. Dreamer. Through medium of dreams. These, the two chief media of divine revelation. (*cf.* Num. xii. 6.) Signs and wonders. To accredit his mission, and apparently true, yet not wrought by God, but by the power of the wicked one to deceive. (2 Thess. ii. 9.)

2. **Go after other gods and forsake Jehovah;** therefore the prophet, a false prophet, a seducer and impostor, and must be put to death.

3. **Know, prove, or test the people in loyalty.** (*cf.* viii. 2; Gen. xxii. 1.)

4, 5. Israel must cleave firmly to God. There must be regular judicial procedure against the impostor. The people, the whole community must take part in the stoning to show their horror at the crime, and clear themselves of complicity in it. God only must be the object of regard and they must not be thrust, forced from the way in which they have to walk. Thus put away evil, an exhortation often given as an affair of importance. (*cf.* chaps. xvii. 7; xix. 19; xxi. 21; xxii. 22, 24.)

6. A second temptation to idolatry might be from blood-relations and intimate friends. Brother, fraternal tie. Wife, object of dearest affection. Friend, loved as much as our own life. (1 Sam. xviii. 1, 3.)

7, 8. The gods to be worshipped might be near or far off; might be different to the idols of Canaan, "or commend themselves by the charm of peculiarity and novelty." There must be no yielding, nor must the tempters escape. The accumulation of synonyms (*pity, spare, conceal*) serves to make the passage more emphatic. Israel was to put to death without pity and stone the offender. (Lev. xx. 2.)

12-18. A third case when one city *hears* of another city which has been led astray. Worthless, profligate men may rise up. (v. 13.) Children of Belial. Wicked, designing and lawless men (Jud. xix. 22; 1 Sam. i. 16; xxv. 26). (*Sept.* perverse men.)

13. Withdrawn. Verses 5 and 10, indicating strong persuasion, a degree of force, not easy seduction.

14. Thou. The magistrate to whom it officially belonged to investigate. If the report was true, the inhabitants were beyond protection and smitten. Man and beast were put to death without reserve, and all booty heaped together and burned with the city.

16. For the Lord. "As a whole offering to the Lord thy God;" sanctified to him by destruction. (Lev. vi. 15, 16.)

17. Nothing must *cleave* to Israel, no spoil must be taken that the Lord may turn from His anger.

### ENTICEMENTS OF FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 1-5.

Former perils might spring from Canaanites, now they may arise among themselves. Hence they must take care not to be drawn away if any should tempt them. "If there arise," etc.

I. The Purpose of their Enticements. "Let us go after other gods," to revolt from Jehovah, which is treason—a crime against the law and authority of God, against the organisation and life of society. Strange that any should be guilty in Israel, or in the present day, of such wickedness! But many, professedly learned and religious, entice from God and give divine honours to saints and images. 1. *From God whose authority is supreme and should be revered.* "The Lord your God." Doctrines, revelations, and miracles which pretend to be of God and are not so, vie with his law and authority; usurp his throne and claim absolute supremacy. 2. *From God whose past favours should bind to him.* "Which brought you out of the land of Egypt," etc. (ver. 5). One thing was certain, repeated to Israel a thousand times and written as with a sunbeam in their history—that God was supreme. God, and God alone, had redeemed them from bondage and oppression. God's constant goodness should touch our sensibility, excite our gratitude, and lead us to most joyful obedience.

II. The credentials by which they entice. The kingdom of lies has its wonders as well as the kingdom of truth, and prophets of God have their imitators. In our time we have dreamers of dreams, seers and pretenders to inspiration. "Imitators are a servile race," says Fontaine. 1. *They dream dreams.* Pretend to have revelations from God in visions of the night. Jews had great regard for dreams, observed them, and often consulted those who

pretended to explain them. This custom was forbidden. We must look only to God and His servants. 2. *They perform wonders.* The prophet gives "a sign," a prediction of some future event; performs "a wonder" or feat of power—some counterfeit appearance of the supernatural produced by human artifice or Satanic agency. 3. *Their signs and wonders come to pass.* Predictions and miracles are authenticated by apparent facts. But miracles alone do not prove the truth of the doctrine and the divine mission of the performer. The doctrine must commend itself to conscience before it can be sealed by miracle. There are those "whose coming (presence) is after the working of Satan with (three means) all power and signs and lying wonders" (*lit.* of falsehood) to attest false doctrine and lead astray. (2 Thess. ii. 9.)

III. The treatment to be shown to these false prophets. In this matter there is no uncertainty, and there must be no hesitation. 1. *They must be rejected.* "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet." God's law is the standard of truth, all that contradicts this is false. No sign nor wonder must lead us to believe in one whose purpose falsifies his profession. The God of truth can never lie. "I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart (a wilful fraud). (Jer. xiv. 13, 14). 2. *They must be punished.* "That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death" (ver. 5). The risks and guilt must be removed by putting away the guilty one; spare him, the infection will spread and you are responsible. "Thus must the mischief be put away." We are not to persecute and put to death. But we must denounce error, guard against seducers, and brand with infamy all attempts to "go after other gods." "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9, 11).

#### FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 1-5.

"The standing rule of faith and practice had been given once for all. That the people were to hold fast. The prophet who propounded another rule could only be an imposter. We need not then suppose that Moses is putting an impossible case by way of enforcing his words, as St. Paul does (Gal. i. 6); nor yet that the prophet in question is one who was originally a true prophet, and obtained authority by his miracles as such, but was afterwards drawn away into apostasy." (*Speak. Com.*) The prophet, by his teaching, plainly contradicts the accredited standard of truth, advocates idolatry, and therefore he is a false prophet.

I. False prophets are permitted to rise up among the people. They appeared in Israel, in the days of Christ and in apostolic times. It is predicted they will come "in the last days." (Mt. xxiv. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1.) God's people are often sorely tried, and the Christian Church sifted. Heresies, prodigies and controversies shake the faith, and "false prophets" work "great signs and wonders" to "deceive the very elect," if it were possible. (Mt. xxiv. 24).

II. The people are often ready to obey false prophets when they appear. The moral condition of the people and the facts of history prove this. We have a love for the wonderful, a craving for novelty. We are ignorant of God, and our hearts tend towards idolatry. The teaching of seducers is bewitching; we listen, believe and are drawn astray. (Gal. iii. 1). "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God."



III. The consequences of this obedience will be serious. Serious to the teacher, the taught, and the community at large. 1. *Apostasy from God.* God was the Sovereign and Supreme Ruler in Israel. Idolatry was not simply a spiritual offence, but direct rebellion against their king. It was a political, a national offence; high treason itself, punishable by the law. 2. *Utter ruin.* The offender was stoned to death, and perished not alone in his iniquity. Apostasy will destroy character and life. Theudas was slain, and as many as believed him scattered. Judas of Galilee drew many after him, but perished, and his followers were disappointed. (Acts v. 36, 37). Watch and pray, and let none "thrust thee out of the way."

#### WALKING AFTER THE LORD.—Verse 4.

"Walk after the Lord your God." 1. In reverent imitation. His example is before you—follow it. 2. With affectionate fear. You must not be familiar with God; He is your Lord and Maker. 3. With all obedience. Show your love for him by obeying his commands. 4. With holy zeal. Suffer no profaning of His name, no desecration of His temple. (*Bib. Museum*).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

In this chapter we have *three enticements* from God. False teachers (verses 1-5); intimate friends (verses 6-12); wicked cities (verses 12-17).

Ver. 2. *After other gods.* Awful guilt in the Israelite. Strong delusion and infinite risk in our day. *Let us go.* 1. A dangerous pursuit. 2. In search of an unknown object. "Gods which thou hast not known." 3. Hence folly to enter the path. Forsaking God, who is known to be good and holy.

Deceit is the false road to happiness; and all the joys we travel to through vice, like fairy banquets, vanish when we touch them.—A. Hill.

Ver. 4. *Distinguishing marks of godliness.* Walk, fear, keep, obey, serve and cleave. *Walk after God.*

1. God the great end of life. 2. Keeping this end in view will save from manifold temptations. 3. The method of pursuing active, affectionate and constant obedience. One or two good actions, a step or two, will not make a walker. There must be continued motion, unwearied and steady as the stars in their orbits. "Enoch walked (habitually and closely) with God." (Gen. v. 24). *Walk with the Lord.* 1. Not *before* Him in desire, plans and anticipations. "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." 2. Not *behind* Him in fear, hesitation or reluctance. 3. But *with* Him in confidence, affection and joy. Like a child walking hand in hand with its father.

"Mutual love, the crown of all our bliss."

—Milton.

#### THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF AFFECTION.—Verses 6-11.

The next danger springs from the influence of affection. If miracle or supernatural fail, those near and dear may seduce. But even they, if found guilty after fair and formal trial, must be put to death.

I. Seduction may come from intimate friends. A *brother*, who should be a helper; a *daughter*, who should be dutiful; a *wife*, like Job's (2, 9) may

entice. An intimate and familiar *friend*, whom we love as ourselves, in whom we confide our secrets, may secretly plot to draw away from God. Strongest temptations are often from nearest friends.

II. Friends who thus seduce are guilty of the greatest crime. "They are are not friends, but foes in a man's own household." A friend consults our welfare; but these secretly plot against character, reputation, and position. Their design is disgraceful, and no affection, no degree of kindred must screen their crime nor conceal their persons. "I was wounded in the house of my friends."

III. The claims of God are superior to Human Affection. We must be kindly affectionate one to another; but we must prefer God to our best friends. "Thou shalt not consent unto him" (ver. 8). When two claims come into collision, the weaker must give way. Though we must not cease to love, yet we must act as if we hated (Luke xiv. 26, 27); we must disobey, and, if need be, desert those to whom we are naturally bound, and follow our higher calling. God must have and deserves the whole, and not halves. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat. x. 37).

#### GUILT AND DANGER IN DEPARTING FROM GOD.—Verses 8-11.

Consider this ordinance as—

I. A temporary enactment. With the cessation of the theocracy it has ceased. Though, at first sight, it may seem severe, yet it was—1. Just, as it respected the individual; for he was guilty of most heinous, most ruinous offence. 2. Merciful, with regard to the public. Most solemn were the issues to the Jews and to mankind, which depended on national fidelity. Hence the punishment was stern, severe, and monitory.

II. A lasting admonition. It declares to us in the strongest terms:—1. The evil of departing from God, by whom they had been delivered from bondage and guided in their journey. 2. The danger of being accessory to any one's departure from Him. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins" (1 Tim. v. 22; 2 John 11. 3. The need we have of firmness and steadfastness in religion. "If sinners entice thee consent thou not."—C. Simeon.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 6. 1. *The nature of friendship.* "Thy friend as thine own soul." A friend is a second self. Numerous are examples. David and Jonathan in Scripture, Achilles and Patroclus in Homer, Nisus and Euryalus in Virgil, and the well known story of Damon and Pythias. 2. *The abuse of friendship.* In betraying secrets, enticing to evil. "Try your friend before you choose him." All who assume the name are not entitled to the confidence of a friend. "As to myself," said

Napoleon, "I know well that I have not one true friend. As long as I continue what I am, I may have as many pretended friends as I please."

Vers. 6-8. I. *The inducements of the tempter.* 1. From those least suspected—sister, brother, parent, or friend. 2. In secret. "Entice thee secretly." Wickedness dreads light and seeks to conceal itself. 3. Plausible. This religion is popular "the gods of the people," and yours is singular and

confined to one God. "Let us go."  
 II. *The spirit in which they must be met.* 1. With firmness. No, we will not go. 2. With a sense of the danger incurred. In forsaking God he forsook the way of our fathers, and the way in

which we have been trained. We degenerate in our character and rush into danger. "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed."

### THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF NUMBERS.—*Verses 12-18.*

The third instance of enticement is that of a whole city in revolt. If the city was found guilty after inquiry, then all its inhabitants were to be put to death, and it was to be reduced to a heap to avert the anger of God.

I. **Multitudes may be disposed to evil.** In the Church, in a community, in a city, a few may affect many. "Children of Belial," throw off all restraints of conscience and law, and cry out "let us go and serve other gods." Many walk in the broad path to destruction, but in the narrow, only here and there a traveller is found.

II. **Multitudes disposed to evil are not to lead us astray.** "Then shalt thou inquire and make search." We are not to be unduly influenced by numbers. Majorities are not always right. Truth may be ridiculed and its adherents in the minority. Luther was told by a monk to whom he was attached, "the whole world is against you: how can you persist in the course you have chosen?" The noble reply was—"if the whole world be against Luther, then Luther will be against the whole world." We must rest upon the rock and hold to the revealed Word. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

III. **Vigorous means are to be used to destroy the evil.** Cattle and citizens were to be "utterly" destroyed, and all the spoil burned in the streets. We are not authorised to destroy by fire and sword. But by spiritual agencies we must purify the Church, educate the country, and destroy the evils which curse society. We must watch public sentiment, refute error, and preach "the truth as if in Jesus" to save men from apostacy and death.

### HABITATIONS DIVINELY FIXED.—*Verses 12.*

The clause "which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell in," significantly reminds them that the real ownership of their dwellings rested in the Lord (*cf.* Lev. xxv. 23), and that they, the mere tenants, must not allow His property to become a centre of rebellion against His just authority.—*Speak. Com.*

I. **Residence in a city, the gift of God.** All the earth is God's. In town or country there is a providence over men; a permission to fix their abode. Momentous junctures in life are often fore-appointments of an unrecognised Protector, who settles the limits of nations, locates the residence of men, "and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations."

II. **Residence in a city disturbed by wicked men.** There may be splendid buildings, noble institutions and great advantages in cities. But often dangers and temptations outweigh privileges. Sons of Belial corrupt the population and



draw from allegiance to God. Lot thought Sodom was a desirable residence, but "he was vexed with the filthy conversation (*wanton behaviour*, licentious life) of the wicked (*the lawless*)." (2 Pet. i. 7).

III. Residence terminated by the destruction of a city. We are only tenants at will. Pestilence and fire may drive away. The abominations of the inhabitants may bring down the judgments of God. No place is secure, no abode is permanent below. Seek, therefore, "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-18. *Rumours and the reputation of the Church.* I. The case supposed—a flying rumour; city talk, etc. II. The duty enjoined. 1. Not to be slighted or hushed up. 2. Not to be rashly acted upon. 3. To be carefully sifted. 4. If found to be true, to be followed by prompt and decisive action. Learn—To be jealous of reports touching the integrity of God's people, or the institutions of religion.—*Bib. Museum.*

Vers. 12-15. *The duty of magistrates.* 1. Not to judge before they know. Many act against knowledge, but none can act rightly without it. We can neither teach nor give judgment concerning that which we know not. 2. To inquire that they may know. "Here are three words—First, they must inquire; and if upon inquiry they got not information, then they were to *make search*; and if upon search they did not find, then they were to *ask diligently*; that is, to renew the inquiry, that by interrogating all persons who possibly know anything of the cause, they might search out the cause which they knew not." (*Caryl*). "I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out." 3. To punish justly when they discover the guilty. They should have respect for law, and care

for those under law. Equal and impartial justice must be done to all. "Justice proportions the smartness to the fault; so that we may behold the greatness of the offence in the fitness of the punishment."—*W. Secker.*

Ver. 16. *The memorial heap.* "An heap for ever." 1. A monument of Divine justice against sin. 2. A beacon warning to all posterity. "This day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger. (Jer. xlv. 2,3.)

*A city sacrificed for the nation*, or the good of many demanding the sacrifice of a few. A principle of Divine procedure, common in operation, strange in nature, benevolent in design, and worthy of devout regard.

Ver. 17, 18. *Two courses of conduct.* 1. Apostacy exposing multitudes to danger and death. 2. Obedience and its benefits. (a) In warding off Divine anger. (b) Securing Divine mercy. (c) Causing increase of posterity. "Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1-5. *Go after.* The question is not whether a doctrine is beautiful, but whether it is true. When we want to go to a place, we don't ask whether

the road leads through a pretty country, but whether it is the right road, the road pointed out by authority, the turnpike road.—*Hare.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Thy brother.* None of the affections have been noted to fascinate and bewitch, but love and envy.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 6. *Thy friend as thine own soul.*

"Friendship is the cement of two minds,  
As of one man the soul and body is,  
Of which one cannot sever but the other  
Suffers a needful separation.—*Chapman.*

Ver. 8. *Consent not.* He that yields to temptation, debases himself with a debasement from which he can never arise.—*Mann.*

"They that fear the adder's sting will not  
come near his hissing."—*Chapman.*

Vers. 12 and 18. *One of thy cities.* To a single teacher the hope of an entire city is often entrusted.—*Scriber.*

Ver. 14. *Enquire.* I reverence

numbers; but only when they produce proof, not when they shun enquiry.—*St. Athanasius.*

Ver. 17. *His anger.* The wrath of man is the rage of man; but the wrath of God is the reason of God.—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Ver. 18. *Hearken to the Lord.* We remember the anecdote of the Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against whose prohibition was his son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then in triumphant feeling carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman refused to recognise the instinct which prompted this as deserving of the name of love. Disobedience contradicted it and deserved death.—*F. W. Robertson.*

## CHAPTER XIV.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The people were not only to suppress idolatry, but their whole life and conduct must be ruled according to their holy character and high calling. They must not, like other nations, disfigure their bodies in passionate grief, nor defile themselves with unclean meat.

1. Cut. (Lev. xix. 28) as idolaters in mourning. (1 Kings xviii. 28; Jer. xvi. 6, xli. 5; Ezek. vii. 18.) Baldness. A space between the eyebrows left bare in honour of the dead. (Lev. xxi. 5.)

2. Holy. A super-added motive to induce obedience and "an emphatic elucidation of the first clause of ver. 1."—*Del.*

3-20. Clean and unclean animals. (*cf.* Leviticus xi.) Nothing abominable or unclean to be eaten.

4. Beasts. These, whose flesh would be excellent, mentioned here; because the Israelites were about to be settled in the land of promise, on the mountain pastures of which a portion of the tribes were already established, and where these animals abounded. (*Jamieson.*) Hart, the Syrian deer (*cf.* xii. 15.) Roe-buck, the gazelle. Pyrgarg, or bison, a species of antelope, common in tracts which had been frequented by the Israelites. Wild Ox, translated "wild bull." (Is li. 20.) Must be distinguished from the *re'em* of Num. xxiii. 22. Chamois, *lxx.*, the camel-leopard, *i.e.*, the giraffe. All the creatures here given are classed by *Bochart*, among the goat and deer kind.

6. Hoof. Those only to be eaten which completely divide the hoof and chew the cud. The exceptions are given here and in Lev. x. 4-7.

9, 10. Fish. The rule is simple and comprehensive. Any fish from salt or fresh water might be eaten. But shell-fish of all kinds, whether mollusks or crustaceans, and cetaceous animals, were prohibited as well as fish which appears to have no scales, like the eel.—*Speak. Com.*

20. Birds. The same as those in Lev. xi. 13, *sqq.*

13. The Glede is added. These are chiefly birds of prey; unclean feeders; needful as scavengers, but not good for food.

21. Dieth of itself. The arrangement is peculiar to the repetition of law in Deut. (Lev. xvii. 15; xxii. 8. Stranger. A heathen traveller or sojourner; for a proselyte was subject to the law as well as a Jew. Seethe, a third repetition, a prohibition against a Pagan ceremony. (Ex. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26.)

22, 23. Tithe. The dedication of a tenth part of the year's produce in everything was a duty; to be brought to the sanctuary. The tithes and firstlings named here, to introduce certain directions concerning sacred meals celebrated out of them.

24-29. Too Long. An agreement anticipating settlement in Canaan. Distances made it difficult to carry produce to the sanctuary. It might be commuted or sold for money's worth and the proceeds go towards a social feast. Whatsoever thy soul *lusteth after*, not in a bad sense, but simply preference or liking. Levite- (chap. xii. 19.) Every third year the whole tithe of the year's produce was set apart, not eaten before the Lord in the sanctuary, as a portion for the Levite, widow and stranger in different towns. This was not a third or additional tithe, but the former, differently applied. The first and second year's tithe, was eaten in the sanctuary; the tithe of the third year was for the poor and needy at home. Bless thee. As an encouragement to carry out these instructions, God's blessing is said to follow (chap. xv. 10.)

### CONFORMITY TO WORDLY CUSTOMS.—Verses 1-3.

As the chosen of God, Israel must not only put away idolatry, but abstain from heathen superstitions and practices. They were endowed with nobler life, called to a special position, and must not conform to the customs of nations by whom they were surrounded.

I. Conformity is inconsistent with a Christian's position. He is called out of the world, separated from it in habits, character and aim: he must not go back to his old course of life. Christians are "a peculiar people," precious to God and to the world; they must not lose their value and spiritual distinction. They should live near to God and not descend to base and worldly positions. Exalted above others they must keep their dignity, never dishonour their God, nor forget His claims. "I have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. (Lev. xx. 26).

II. Conformity is derogatory to a Christian's character. They are "*children of the Lord*," and should not be slaves to fashion and habit. As sons of God they must walk in love and free from idols. Walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they are called. (Ep. iv. 1). They are holy, "*a holy people unto the Lord*," and must keep themselves unspotted from the world. (Jas. i. 27). Character, righteous character should be the impress of God's people. To be like God should be their desire and aim. "He that avoids iniquity is the best Christian," says Calamy. There must not be a mere outward nonconformity but inward spiritual transfiguration which makes life new and holy—new in motive, source and end. "Be not *conformed* (fashioned) to this world; be ye *transformed* (transfigured, Mt. xvii. 2; changed, 2 Cor. iii. 18) by the renewing of your mind." (Rom. xii. 2).

III. Conformity is opposed to Divine purpose in a Christian's life. "Chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations." Here we have Divine proprietorship and wonderful exaltation. To be filled with the spirit and fashioned with the influence of the world is to lose sight of God's purpose in life and duty. Christians should be consecrated to God's service, acquire holy habits, and foster holy desires. They are chosen and blessed to set forth God's glory—"to shew forth the *praises* (virtues, excellences) of Him who hath called you out of darkness (ignorance, sin and misery) into His marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9).



WORLDLY SORROW.—*Verses 1, 2.*

“Man’s days are full of trouble from one source or another” (Job v. 7.) “Sorrow is at once the lot, the trial, and the privilege of man,” says Helps. But how different the spirit and the method of expressing it. Israel must not mourn like other nations for the dead. Wordly sorrow is most unbecoming in God’s people.

**I. It is excessive in its nature.** It is often assumed and unnatural, noisy and passionate in demonstration. Heathens went to excess in their wild paroxysms of grief. It was not the grief of civilisation and softness; but the grief of a savage and a child.

**II. It is injurious in its results.** It was common among Canaanites and Phœnicians to cut themselves. Excitable nations of the east often made ghastly incisions on their faces, and in other parts of the body, with sharp instruments. The Persians, Abyssinians, Bedouins, and other races, still practise this. It was deemed a token of respect for the dead, and well-pleasing to deities who presided over the grave. The true Israelite is created in God’s image and must not mourn thus. Human suffering and woe are not acceptable to God. That sorrow which leads to bodily injury and drives away from God is the sorrow of Judas who hanged himself—a sorrow which results in no amendment. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. vii. 10).

**III. It is hopeless in its aim.** It does not propitiate God, nor does it affect the dead. The Christian is taught that God rules all events. Departed friends not taken by chance or accident. They are in the hands of God, and, if His children, beyond the reach of harm. Through “the shadow of death” the believer looks by faith. The “eternal night” of classic authors is illuminated by the resurrection of Christ, who has “become the first fruits of them that slept.” Jesus has “abolished death” (taken away its power, made it of no effect) “and hath brought life and immortality” (incorruptibility) “to light through (by means of) the gospel” (2 Tim. i. 10). We can, therefore, see through and beyond the grave—know our own lot and the lot of dear friends. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Three great blessings.*

1. Election, “chosen.” 2. Adoption, “children.” 3. Sanctification, “holy people.”

*Distinguished Marks.* Distinguished,

1. By the grace of God which made them. 2. By the Providence of God. A herd of poor slaves could not have gained their place and constituted themselves into a nation. 3. By the laws of God. Laws wiser than any other nation. 4. By the purpose of God. Separated from the rest of the world.

Associated with great privileges and destined to spread great principles.

*Thy God*, peculiarly thine as opposed to every other. The object of thy affection and trust (Ps. lxxiii. 24-28). “God bases all the prescriptions of His law, as the Great Lawgiver, on the ground that those that were to obey were his own chosen, beloved, redeemed, and sanctified people. He begins by declaring first of all, their grand relationship to Him as the Lord their God the King of Israel. “Ye are,” by

adopting love, "the children of the Lord your God." A Covenant God; yours because He has given Himself to you; yours because ye have deliberately chosen Him; and with a solemn oath have promised, "We will serve the Lord our God." Well, upon this strong ground, this sure foundation, as affectionate as it is sure, He says, "you shall not imitate the heathen by

mourning for the dead as they mourn;" or transferred from Judaism to Christianity. "You shall not weep for your dead as others weep, who have no hope; having a better, surer, nobler prospect, alike of the state of the soul, and the emergence from the grave of the earthly shrine it has left behind it."—*Dr. Cumming.*

#### GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S TABLE.—*Verses 3-20.*

Here we have regulations concerning animal food for the Israelites, and cautions against defilement by contact with dead flesh, which they were not permitted to eat. Substantially the restrictions are a repetition, with a little variation of the rules given in Lev. xi. Though minute and apparently trivial these rules are full of instruction and meaning. They set forth God's provision for man's table.

**I. Provision, Divine in its source.** Israel could not have procured it and would not have known without Divine teaching what was good for them. We can neither catch a fish nor shoot a bird without a Providence. We are helpless and dependent as Israel was, taught to pray for daily bread and to recognise that power which can "furnish a table in the wilderness" Ps. lxxviii. 19.

**II. Provision good in quality.** Nothing unclean, nothing unwholesome, was specified. Not anything was to be eaten apt to stimulate gross and sensual passions, or to foster coarse tastes and degrading habits. The laws were subservient to sanitary and religious ends, and the food provided was suitable and distinct from that of idolatrous nations. Divine wisdom decided what was best for the purpose. They were thus preserved in health and vigour, and ceremonially kept from the taint of death.

**III. Provisions abundant in quantity.** There was no stint in beasts, birds or fish. The articles of food were nutritious and abundant. God's legislation for our lower reminds of His care for our higher nature. There is no lack anywhere. Temporally and spiritually, means are provided to satisfy our wants and promote our happiness. Let us remember our Benefactor, for Henry says, that we cannot put a morsel of food into our mouths till God puts it into our hands—discern kindness not only in prescribing, but in prohibiting, and be grateful to "the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Tim. vi. 17). For a man may be blessed with riches, wealth, and honour; want nothing, "yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof." (Ecc. vi. 2).

#### TOUCHING THE UNCLEAN.—*Verses 3, 21.*

By eating creatures that are unclean, which are described as "abominable," the people made themselves abominable and repulsive. Hence the admonition to abstain from objects of defilement which rob of holy communion with God.

**I. Defilement is easy.** Involuntary or accidental contact was enough. It was difficult, if not impossible to avoid the touch. So with the attractions

and sins of "this present world." Because it is near and present, it affects the senses, influences the mind, and directs the life. "Touch not, taste not, handle not" its pleasures.

II. Defilement is serious in its consequences. It interrupted fellowship with God and excluded from the sanctuary for a time. It prohibited the touch of sacred things and all intercourse with the legally clean. What a type of sin in polluting the soul and excluding from heaven. "This ye know, that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ep. v. 5).

III. Defilement must be avoided by strenuous effort. This rule necessitated Israel to pay great attention to cleanliness, personal and national. "Touch not—eat not." If there were no touching there would be no eating, no participation. (Eve and Achan). Daniel refused the food from the king's table. Entire separation is enjoined. Watch, pray and keep your garments unspotted from the world. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord (separated, Hos. iv. 17), and touch not the (any) unclean thing." (2 Cor. vi. 17).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 4. *These and these only.* 1. That ye may be at mine appointment for your very meat, as chief Lord of all. 2. That there may be a difference betwixt you and all other people. 3. That ye may be taught to study purity, and know that the very creatures are defiled by man's sin. 4. That ye may have these things as "a shadow of things to come" (Col. ii. 16, 17).—*Trapp; Lev. xi.*

Ver. 6. *Cheweth cud.* In this combination of *parting the hoof* and *chewing the cud*, the union of two moral and spiritual qualities is supposed to be spiritualised, viz., *sure walking* in the way of God's laws (Rom. ii. 18; iii. 20–22; Gal. ii. 12–14; Ep. v. 15) and meditation upon it (Ps. i. 2).—*Wordsworth.* The hearer of God's word ought to be like those animals that chew the cud; he ought not only to feed upon it, but to ruminate upon it (*St. Aug.* on Ps. 46). *Clean and unclean.* 1. *A Sanitary enactment.* Unclean were most unhealthy in warm climates, and even now their flesh is not considered wholesome and nutritious. 2. *An argument for separation.* The distinction in meats would prevent intercourse with heathen nations, and contamination with idola-

try and vice. It kept them distinct and peculiar, and raised an impassable barrier to evil customs—a barrier stronger than difference of creed, diversity of language, and system of polity. Christians must stand and live apart from worldly maxims and customs. 3. *A type of holy life.* The injunction to abstain from unclean meats was a symbol of the holiness and purity that became them as people of God. It set forth that kingdom which "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). "The ordinance of Moses was for the whole nation. It was not like the Egyptian law, intended for priests alone; nor like the Hindoo law, binding only on the twice-born Brahmin; nor like the Parsee law, to be apprehended and obeyed only by those disciplined in spiritual matters. It was a law for the people, for every man, woman, and child of the race chosen to be "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 6). It was to be one of the foreshadows of the higher spiritual quality, of the better seed of Abraham, which was, in later ages, pronounced "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet.



ii. 9; cf. Is. lxi. 6; 1 Cor. x. 17).—*Speak. Com.*

Vers. 3-20. In this provision of food we see—1. *A mark of divine condescension.* If kings legislated for the diet of their people, is it beneath the King of Israel to appoint the food for his chosen people? "All that we know of God," says Dr. Cumming, "in creation, in providence, in redemption, leads us to see that He takes as much care of what the world calls, in its ignorance, little things, as He does of what the world thinks, in

equal ignorance, great and weighty things." 2. *A proof of divine benevolence.* It is kind to provide at all. But what thought indicated, in the choice of animals which multiplied slowly, which were not difficult to obtain, found without leaving the camp, and without danger and contact with heathens around them. All this intended to reclaim and bless!

In ev'ry way, in every sense,  
Man is the care of Providence;  
And whenso'er he goeth wrong,  
The errors to himself belong.

S. BUTLER.

### SEETHING A KID.—Verse 21.

This injunction is here repeated, and must therefore be of some importance (cf. Ex. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26). He may view it—

I. As a protest against superstition. The repetition immediately after directions concerning the first fruits of harvest, indicates specific reference to heathen custom. Idolators at the end of harvest seethed a kid in its mother's milk and sprinkled the broth as a magical charm on fields and gardens, to make them more productive. Israel must not imitate this custom. None of the gods can send the shower and fertilize the earth. "He causeth the grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man."

II. As a law of humanity. There was great cruelty in making the milk of the mother, intended for the sustenance of the kid, the means of its destruction. Some have called this prohibition "an excess of legislative refinement," but in whatever light we look at this custom, it had an appearance of barbarity. "This was a gross and unwholesome dish, calculated to kindle up animal and ferocious passions, and on this account, as well as its barbarity, Moses may have forbidden it." "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty '*unjust violence*,' 'homesteads of violence.'"—*Kay*. (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) But the religion of the Bible is humane (cf. Lev. xxii. 28; Deut. xxii. 16; xxv. 4.) Rational creatures must be treated kindly, and we must shun everything that blunts our worst sensibilities. If God has tender care for animals so should we have. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Prov. xii. 10.)

I would not enter on my list of friends,  
(Tho' graced with polished manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility), the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.—*Cowper*.

### THE DEDICATION OF THE TENTH.—Verses 22, 23; 28, 29.

A titling of the produce of cultivated ground and the firstling of herds and flocks were brought to the sanctuary every year. Here a sacrifice meal was prepared for Israel and their households that they might rejoice before the Lord and learn to fear Him always.

**I. To meet the claims of God.** There must be devout acknowledgment of God as the source of all mercies, without whose care the earth would not yield its produce, nor the flocks their increase. Corn, wine and oil come from Him. In every department of life we must recognise His rights. The seventh of our time, the first fruits of the field and the first-born of the family, the revenues of the family and the Church should be given to him as Owner and Proprietor of all things. "Well may we think our substance due when we owe ourselves," says *Bp. Hall*.

**II. To support the works of piety.** The claims of creative right have strengthened by the infinite price of the Redeemer's blood. Apart from what is applied to personal, family and civil uses, some portion, if not a tenth, is required for worship, evangelisation and humanity. 1. *Religiously.* The ministers and ordinances of God's house must be upheld. Contributions are put upon the principle of willing gifts, rather than of stipulated demands. Though God commanded Israel to bring their offerings, no law compelled the disobedient. Thus we are treated with confidence and consideration. God honours men by permitting them to expend their treasures and skill on sacred edifices and to render solemn worship to Him. 2. *Socially.* "The Levite and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow shall come and shall eat and be satisfied." In works of charity we gladden others. The helpless and fatherless must never be forgotten. Real generosity is the surest way of thriving. He that gives shall receive, and he that scatters shall increase. The liberal soul shall be made fat. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barn be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Prov. iii. 9, 10).

#### SYSTEMATIC PROVISION FOR BENEFICENT WORK.

On this subject we may collect and arrange a few thoughts from a pamphlet by the Rev. John Ross. Such provision is—

**I. The duty of God's people.** In Jewish law God claimed tithes and gifts for the worship of the sanctuary and the necessities of the poor. Conspicuous features of these demands are—the priority of God's claim—that *provision* for it be made before man's self-enjoyment, that it bear some suitable proportion to the Divine glory and grace, and that for fulness and power, *system* is essential; *i.e., that the work of God be provided for before man's indulgence.* (Lev. xix; Num. xviii; Deut. xiv). The New Testament has also its plan of meeting God's claim, containing the same elements of *priority, certainty, proportion* and *system.* See 1 Cor. xvi. 2, sustained and illustrated by the weighty arguments and motives of 2 Cor. chaps. viii., ix.

**II. The Financial Law of Christ.** Christ is sole King in His Church. The constitution of this church is Christian, not Jewish. The apostle Paul was the organiser of churches, and the first epistle to the Corinthians is the great Church organising epistle. In its closing chapter the apostle institutes a system of finance. This system bears the character of an *authoritative and repeated law.* "As I have *given order* to the Churches of Galatia, *even so do ye.*" The method taught by the apostle to provide the revenues of the Church is an expansion of Jewish and Pentecostal church systems, an example for us, an implied and inferential obligation sustained by cumulative and presumptive argument. New Testament institutions are not given with Sinaitic form and severity. They meet us as sacred provisions for urgent occasions. They appeal to a willing heart more than to a legal mind. Christ rules in love, but His will should not have less authority or constraining power on that account. (Jno. vii. 17.)

**III. The necessity of the Age.** The present age needs loftiness of aim, seriousness of feeling and ardour of devotion. Faithful consecration of substance to God, elevated by Christian love to a financial rule of life, would nourish every moral and spiritual principle in the soul. Storing the Lord's portion is the necessity of the age, from its tendency. 1. To check the idolatry of money and to strengthen the love of God in the heart. 2. To meet adequately the demands of religion and humanity. 3. To exhibit the power and beauty of godliness. By a warm Christian liberality—by asserting the supremacy of, and providing for, things spiritual and eternal. By fostering simplicity of life and personal fidelity to God. By liberally sustaining the honour of Christ in the sight of men.

#### DIVINE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCES.—*Verses 24, 25.*

In the land of Canaan, however, where the people would be scattered over a great extent of country, there would be many for whom the fulfilment of this command would be very difficult—would in fact appear almost impossible. To meet this difficulty, permission was given for those who lived at a great distance from the sanctuary to sell the tithes at home, provided they could not convey them in kind, and then to spend the money so obtained in the purchase of the things required for the sacrificial meals at the place of the sanctuary.—*Delitzsch.* Here we have—

**I. Divine knowledge of man's circumstances.** "If the place be *too far* for thee." God knows our distance from his house—the effort and strength required to get there, "if the way be *too long* for thee," and the very street and house in which we dwell. "The *street* called straight, and the *house* of Judas." (Acts 9, 11; 10, 6). God's knowledge of human actions and human life in all departments is perfect. He is everywhere present to discern and observe our physical and moral condition. His omniscience extends to all space, and to all creatures.

**II. Divine Provision for Man's Future.** This arrangement was made in anticipation of settlement in Canaan. Thus God's providence goes before us in life. The real meaning of providence is to see to provide beforehand (*pro* and *vides*). "God's providence is mine inheritance," says one. He anticipates our difficulties and wants, and makes provision beforehand for every exigency. "For thou *preventest* (goes before) him with the blessings of goodness." (Ps. xxi. 3).

**III. Divine tenderness for Man's welfare.** God seems to consult man's convenience, does not rigidly exact what he cannot give or do. He is no hard taskmaster, but reasonable in demands (Mat. xxv. 4). We see accommodation to circumstances in the law of sacrifice (Lev. v. 7), in rules for commutation (Lev. 27), and in relaxation of injunctions concerning meat (Deut. xii. 21). The spirit of the command is more important than the letter. For if there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according "to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12).

#### CHARITY AT HOME.—*Verses 28, 29.*

Every third year the tithe was to be devoted to works of charity at home. "Lay it up within thy gates."



I. Dispensed to the needy. Widows and orphans, helpless and forsaken, are real objects of charity. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" is a part of New Testament religion. (Jas. i. 27). Our guests are to be invited from the ranks of the poor. "When thou makest a dinner or supper call not thy friends, lest they bid thee again; but the poor, the maimed, for they cannot recompense thee." (Lev. xiv. 12-14).

II. Dispensed in a spirit of gratitude. The rich should be thankful to be able to give, and the poor grateful to receive. God gives no scanty measure to us. Increase of family and of stock, corn and wine in rich abundance. We should cherish a deep sense of our unworthiness, a constant dependence upon the Divine bounty, and to feel that we are the stewards only of the treasures which heaven has put into our hands. "Who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee."

III. Dispensed under the blessing of God. "That the Lord thy God may bless thee." We better enjoy what we have by sharing it with others. There is exquisite delight in acts of kindness. That which is cordially devoted to the cause of God and the benefit of man, lives, in its blessed influence, in human hearts—in immortal fruits—of earthly virtues, in perpetual memorial before God and in eternal harvest of joy. "What I saved I lost; what I spent I had; what I gave I have," said J. J. Gurney. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Man is God's image: but a poor man is

Christ's stamp to boot. Both images regard.

God reckons for him; counts the favour His.

Write "So much given to God." Thou shalt be heard.

Let thy alms go before, and keep heaven's gate

Open for thee; or both may come too late.

HERBERT.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 21. *Holy people.* He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for Himself; He hath set you apart for this end, that you may be holy to Him, as the Hebrew word that signifies holiness imports *setting apart*, or fitting for a peculiar use; be not then untrue to his design, *He hath not called you to uncleanness, but unto holiness* (1 Thes. iv. 7). Therefore be ye holy. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply yourselves to any profane use, whom God hath consecrated to Himself.—*Abp. Leighton.*

than some who have been denominated rational divines are willing to allow—not simply that Jehovah is our Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign, our Protector, the object of our worship, of our supreme love and adoration; but properly, that he is our portion by a peculiar *covenant relation*. As an evidence of this, it deserves to be remarked, that He never proclaims Himself nor is He ever styled in Scripture, "the God of Angels." It must be by virtue of some spiritual transaction, such as never took place with angels, and in which they have no share, that He proclaims Himself our God—all that God or Deity can be to us."

Ver. 23. *The Lord thy God.* "This is very emphatic, expressive not only of a truth, but of a privilege, and of a special privilege. It imports more

Ver. 22. *The law of the tithe.* 1. A Divine appointment. 2. A rule of Christian liberality. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the

land, or the fruit of the tree is the Lords; it is Holy unto the Lord." Lev. xxvii. 30 (*cf.* 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 6, 12, Neh. xiii. 12).

*Consecrated Funds*—how secured; how applied; what results from the application.

Vers. 21, 26, 27. *Social joy in sacrificial meals.* 1. *Its nature* "before the Lord." In His presence, under His control, and bestowed by His mercy. "The joy of the Lord." "True joy is a serious thing," says Bonar. 2. *Its participators.* Levites, strangers, fatherless and widows (ver. 29), representatives of God. "God hath left His poor saints to receive His rents."—Gurnall. 3. *Its aim.* Not for mere display nor popularity.

(a) To sanctify home joy. "That mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God. (b) To secure God's favour. "That the Lord may bless thee." "A kind action is never lost." "Kindness begets kindness." "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov. xix. 17).

Vers. 24–29. *The conscientious discharge of religious duty.* 1. God will have no excuses for disobedience. 2. He makes provision against difficulties in the path of obedience. 3. The spirit of the law may be observed when obedience to the letter is impossible. This is accepted as a real and full obedience.—*Bib. Museum.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1. *Shall not.* The Christian must not attempt to go with the current of a sinful world; if he does, it will not only hinder, but end his religious progress; but he must go against it, and then every effort of his soul will surely be upward, heavenward, Godward.—*Dr. Davies.*

Ver. 2. *Holy people.* When courtiers come down into the country, the common home-bred people possibly think their habits strange; but they care not for that. "It is the fashion at court." What need then have the Godly to be so tender-foreheaded, to be out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? It is the only fashion in the highest court—yea of the King of Kings, Himself.—*Salter.*

Vers. 3–20. *Eat.* Our nature is so intensely symbolical, that where the outward sign of defilement becomes habitual, the inner is too apt to correspond.—(*Mrs Stowe*). *Clean.* Not only man had become unclean, but the irrational creation as well. Sin struck the universe with leprosy to its very heart. Neither four-footed beast,

nor bird, nor reptile, escaped the contagion. The animal creation, therefore, needs to be made clean. Now a certain portion of the human world—the Hebrew nation—has been made clean unto God; but the clean nation must have clean food. Behold, then, a small proportion of the rational and irrational creation made clean by the establishment of the kingdom of God; the remainder of the world, however, continues still in its impurity. But the Gospel undertakes the task of cleansing the *whole universe*.—*Cynddylan Jones.*

Ver. 9. *Fins and scales* are the means by which the excrescences of fish are carried off, the same as in animals by perspiration. I have never known an instance of disease by eating such fish; but those that have no fins or scales cause, in hot climates, the most malignant disorders when eaten; in many cases they prove a mortal poison.—*Whitlaw.*

Ver. 20. *All clean.* The good things of Providence may be considered as having this inscription, *accipe, redde, cave*, that is, "accept us as from God,

return us in gratitude to him, and take care not to abuse us."—*Wilson*.

Ver. 21. *Stranger in gate*. We read in our chronicles of King Oswald, that as he sat at table when a fair silver dish, full of regal delicacies was set before him, and he ready to fall to, hearing from his almoner that there were great store of poor at his gates, piteously crying out for some relief, he did not fill them with words, as "God help them," "God relieve them!" etc., but commanded his steward presently to take the dish off the table and distribute the meat, then beat the dish all in pieces and cast it among them.—*Holdsworth*.

Vers. 22-27. *Tithe*. It is said of Dr. Samuel Wright that his charity was conducted upon rule; for which purpose he kept a purse, in which was found this memorandum:—"Some-

thing from all the money I receive to be put into this purse for charitable purposes. From my salary as minister, which is uncertain, a tenth part—from occasional and extraordinary gifts, which are more uncertain, a twentieth part—from copy money of things I print and interest of my estate, a seventh part."—*Buck*.

Ver. 29. *The Lord thy God*. A friend calling upon the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, during his last illness, said to him, "Sir, you have given us many good advices, pray what are you now doing with your own soul?" "I am doing with it," said he, "what I did forty years ago; I am resting on that word, 'I am the Lord thy God,' and on this I mean to die."

Should boundless wealth increase my store,  
Can wealth my cares beguile?  
I should be wretched still, and poor,  
Without thy blissful smile.

## CHAPTER XV.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The rules for the relief of the poor (Levites, strangers, widows, and orphans) by the triennial tithe are followed by others which forbid oppression.

1. *Seven years*. During the last of the seven, *i.e.*, Sabbatical year (Ex. xxi. 2; xxviii. 11; Lev. xxv. 4; Jer. xxxiv. 14). Release, let go, let lie applied to land (Ex. xxxiii. 11), and must be taken in the same sense here. "The command of the older legislation is here amplified. Not only is the land to have its 'release' or 'rest' for the year, but the debt also."

2. *Manner*, cf. chap. xix. 4; 1 Kings ix. 15. *Creditor*. Master, *i.e.*, owner of a loan, the lender. Release it, not by absolute discharge of the debt, but the payment was not to be pressed that year, during which there was total suspension of land cultivation. *Exact, lit.*, press or urge his neighbour to pay. *Brother*. An Israelite in opposition to a stranger or foreigner. Called, render "because proclamation has been made of the Lord's release." (*Speak. Com.*) The verb is impersonal ("they call"), as Gen. xi. 9; xvi. 14. The Sabbatical year, like the year of Jubilee, was proclaimed for Jehovah, in honour of Him, sanctified to Him, and according to His command.

3. *Foreigner*. Not one who lived among the Israelites, for whom they must have pity; but a stranger of another nation not related to them at all, one who was not bound by this restriction and who could earn income in the seventh as in other years.

4. *Save*. The debt for the year must be released except when there would be no poor borrower. If he was rich, the restoration of the loan might be demanded even in this year. The *margin* "to the end that there be no poor," etc.—that none be reduced to poverty and distress. *Bless*. The creditor would be no loser by not exacting his debt, for God would specially bless the land.

5. *Only if they were obedient*.

6. *Lend*. Remarkably fulfilled in Jewish history. *Reign, rule*, because superior in wealth (cf. xxviii. 1).



7-11. The foregoing laws might operate to the disadvantage of the poor in seeking relief. Moses exhorts them not to cherish a mean and selfish spirit, but give liberally and God will bless them.

7. Harden. Do not suppress natural feeling and compassion.

8. Sufficient. Whatever he needs.

9. Thought, *lit.* a word of Belial or worthlessness in thy heart, by saying the seventh year is at hand; I shall not be able to demand what I lend. Evil, *i.e.*, thou cherishest ill feeling (*cf.* xxviii. 54, 56). Lord against, brings down anger upon thee.

11. Never cease, for sin never ceases. Poverty permitted partly as punishment of sin, and partly to exercise benevolent and charitable feelings.

12-18. Hebrew servants' freedom. Provisions for the poor are followed naturally by rules for the manumission of Hebrew slaves.

12. Sold. "The last extremity of an insolvent debtor when his house or land was not sufficient to cancel his debt, was to be sold as a slave with his family" (Lev. xxv. 39; 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 1-13; Job xxiv. 9; Matt. xviii. 25). These commands are repeated from Ex. xxi. 2-6, with explanations characteristic of Deut.

13, 14. Empty. This an addition. Liberal provision must be made to aid in regaining original status in society. Furnish, *lit.* lay on his neck, *i.e.*, load him. For they were once redeemed from slavery.

15, 16. If he say. The slave might choose to remain with his master instead of going into freedom; then he was not forced to go.

17. His ear must be bored with an awl, and fastened to the door—a symbol of permanent servitude (*cf.* Ex. xxi. 4-6). If a slave determines to have freedom, it must not be considered hard.

18. He has been worth a double-hired servant—"earned and produced so much, that if you had been obliged to keep a day-labourer in his place it would have cost you twice as much." (*Keil.*) He had been without wages for a fixed time, whereas hired servants were engaged yearly (Lev. xxv. 53), at most for three years (Isa. xvi. 14).

19-23. Dedication of the firstborn of cattle. *Firstling*, the firstborn, was dedicated to God as a memorial of deliverance from Egypt, virtually sanctified the whole (Rom. xi. 16), and was a pledge to all the people of their national union with Him (Ex. xxiii. 30; Lev. xxii. 27). No work. The injunction is added that animals thus set apart were not to be used for earthly purposes, by shearing sheep or yoking bullocks to the plough. They were to be offered year by year and eaten before the Lord. If any were blemished, blind or lame they must not be offered (*ver.* 21); but might, like ordinary animals, be used for food, and could be eaten in all cities of the land.

### THE YEAR OF RELEASE.—Verses 1-7

In this legislation we have wonderful provision for the convenience of Israel, and striking contrast between the wisdom, equity, and mercy of the Hebrew lawgiver and the highest pagan laws. Every seventh year was a year of release, in which the ground rested from culture and the servants freed from debt.

I. The persons to be released. The Sabbath year was a year of great relief, therefore indicating great distress. The subjects requiring help are described in various terms. 1. *Foreigners not to be discharged.* They were outside this arrangement. A stranger from another nation, distinguished from one who lived among them and had claim to benevolence, had no right to remission and privileges. This gives protection to an Israelite and displays no hatred or injustice to a foreigner. "He could earn his usual income in the seventh as in other years, and therefore is not exonerated from liability to discharge a debt any more in the one than the others." "Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it." 2. *Neighbours must be released.* "He shall not exact it

of his neighbour or of his brother." Fellow-Israelites were members of one society and regarded as a "common brotherhood," a type of "the household of faith," enjoying equal rights and privileges; sharing that divine love which embraces all and offers pardon to all. 3. *These neighbours are described as debtors.* "Every creditor that lendeth to his neighbour"—the poor borrowed not for trade nor extravagance, but for subsistence. He could not pay without reducing himself to poverty, or seeking relief in other countries which would be wrong. Kindness must be shown by the lender and gratitude by the borrower. The rich are indebted to the poor as well as the poor dependent upon the rich. God has bound all classes into one family.

II. The reasons for releasing them. Several considerations urge obedience to this law. 1. *The honour of God is concerned.* "Because it is the Lord's release." God claims regard to His authority, and acknowledgment of His providence. We depend upon Him and hold all property from Him. Release of debts was an act for God, the poorest sacrifice, the meanest labour offered to Him are sacred. Purity of motive dignifies toil and renders benevolent acts acceptable to God. 2. *Extreme poverty was prevented.* "To the end there shall be no more poor among you" (margin, ver. 4). Exaction of debts would have reduced many to great straits at a time when there was no labour nor produce. Poverty would be a reproach to the nation and the destruction of its people. The Great Shepherd of Israel considers the poorest of His flock, and like a king protects those who dwell under His shadow. "In the multitude of people is the king's honour; but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince" (Prov. xiv. 28). 3. *The favour of God was secured.* "For the Lord shall bless thee" (ver. 4). They would lose nothing by obedience. God would grant a special blessing on the land. Selfishness evades obligation under cover of prudence. But what we give is a loan to the Lord, who pays again with interest. He gives security in His word which can never fail. Though He is indebted to none, but has a right to all, yet He condescends to be surety for the poor and debtor to His true Helper. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov. xix. 17).

### THE RESTRAINTS OF OPPRESSION.—Verses 7–11.

The previous injunctions might prevent the poor from getting loans. Creditors might take advantage and become exacting towards the borrower. Moses admonishes them not to be hard-hearted and oppressive, but to cherish a spirit of charity and act with liberality. We have safeguards against oppression, checks upon selfishness and rapacity.

I. By Providential Interposition. "The Lord's release," which no authority could prevent. In this seventh year there was rest for the soil, pause in the race for wealth, and protection for the poor. In national and domestic affairs God often interferes. Tyrants upon the throne, and tormentors in the cottage, are restrained, delayed and frustrated in their design. In the ambition of Lot and the aggressions of Nebuchadnezzar, in the bondage of Egypt, and the revolutions of France, we had sad warnings against covetousness and haste to be rich. Grasping by unjust means will end in shame and fill with the curse of an avenging God.

The cries of orphans and the oppressor's eye  
Doth reach the stars.—Dryden.

**II. By the enforcement of liberality.** "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him" (verse 8). The claims of poorer brethren were to be generously and gladly met. The evasion of this duty was a sinful violation of the spirit of the law (verse 9). It was designed to restrain the selfishness of the creditor and prevent him from pressing too hard upon the weak. "The rich ruleth over the poor" too often in harshness (Prov. xxii. 7). Man becomes an alien to his brother, the victim of his meanness, not the object of his sympathy. The warnings of God's word and providence are loud and repeated. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself but shall not be heard" (Prov. xxi. 13).

**III. By the cultivation of kindly feelings.** "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart" (verse 9). We must not only bestow the gift, but cherish right feeling. It is possible to "give all our goods to feed the poor," without one atom of true charity of heart (1 Cor. xiii. 3). "Bowels of mercies and kindness" must be the mark and source of our liberality (express yearnings which touch our inward parts—Gen xliii. 30; Jer. xxxi. 20; Luke i. 78) (Col. iii. 12). We should think, feel, and act as God does, who is "pitiful and of tender mercy."

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods!  
Draw near them, then, in being merciful:  
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.—*Shakespeare.*

#### CONSIDERATION OF THE POOR.—*Verses 9-11.*

Society is separated into distinct classes, yet bound together into one harmonious whole. If rich and poor would each do their duty in their stations, they would become reciprocally a blessing and support to the other. Special consideration must be given to the poor. For—

**I. The oppression of the poor is offensive to God.** "And he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be a sin unto thee." God identifies Himself with their condition and cause, and sets infinite value upon every man. All are equal before Him. "There is no respect of persons before God." Rigorous measures and harshness were distinctly forbidden, and grievously offensive to God (Lev. xxv. 39-43).

**II. The cry of the poor is heard by God.** "He cry unto the Lord." The sufferings of the distressed have a thousand tongues and appeal direct to God. The law condemned robbery for a single night (Lev. xix. 13), uttered woe against him "that useth his neighbour's service without wages" (Jer. xxii. 13); and fearful judgement fell upon those who "oppressed the hireling in his wages" (Mal. iii. 5). "The hire of labourers kept back by fraud crieth, and the cries enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (Jas. v. 4).

**III. Liberality to the poor will be rewarded by God.** "For this thing the Lord will bless thee in all thy works" (verse 10). Whatsoever is done to poor disciples is done to their Master—"Ye have done it unto me" and will in no wise lose its reward. "Liberality," says one, "is the most beneficial traffic that can be—it is bringing our wares to the best market—it is letting out our money into the best hands, we thereby lend our money to God, who repays with vast usury; an hundred to one is the rate He allows at present, and above a hundred millions to one He will render hereafter (Luke 18-30). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."



HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 2. *The Lord's release.*** 1. Devised by His wisdom. 2. Revealing his goodness and grace. 3. Typifying "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 19).

**Ver. 6. *Lending and borrowing.*** 1. Some borrow and are never able to lend. 2. Others borrow and forget to pay back. 3. He that borrows is servant to him that lends (Prov. xxii. 7). He must be dependent and often, too, servile. Try not to borrow at all. "He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing." Owe no man anything but love. "Guard against that poverty which is the result of carelessness or extravagance. Pray earnestly, labour diligently. Should you come to poverty by the misfortunes of the times, submit to your lot humbly, bear it patiently, cast yourself in childlike dependence upon your God."—(Geier on Prov. xxii. 7).

**Vers. 7, 8. *Hand and heart.*** The heart hardened shuts the hand and the poor suffer. The heart sympathetic opens the hands and the poor are relieved. The hand the expression of the heart. "My hand of iron," said Napoleon, "was not at the extremity of my arm, it was immediately connected with my head." "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack (a deceitful) hand" (Prov. x. 4).

**Vers. 7-10. *The claims of the poor upon the rich.*** 1. Claims of help in their poverty. 2. Claims of sympathy in distress. *Triple Almoners*—the feeling heart, the helping hand, the pure eye. "He can never keep his covenant with his God that makes not a covenant with his eyes."—Bp. Hall.

**Ver. 11. *Poor shall never cease out of the land.*** 1. The inequalities of life. *Physically* we have a thousand varieties, and all possible contrasts. *Mentally* there are feeble-minded and strong-minded giants and dwarfs. *Socially* one lives in luxury and clothed with fine linen, another is covered with sores and clad in rags. 2. The appointment of Providence. We have the poor, notwithstanding our legislation, "poor laws," and "almshouses." "Ye have the poor always with you." 3. The bond to unite men together. Inequalities serve to bind men one to another. The man of labour needs the man of capital, and the man of capital the man of labour. The man who sets class against class and teaches them to regard each other with suspicion and ill-will is an enemy to society. "The Lord," says Bp. Sanderson, "in His wise providence, hath so disposed the kings of the world that there should ever be some rich to relieve the necessities of the poor, and some poor to exercise the charity of the rich." "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor" (2 Sam. xii. 1).

*Duty of the Church towards the poor.* Consider—I. That poverty is a real evil, which without any impeachment of the goodness or wisdom of Providence, the constitution of the world actually admits. II. That providential appointment of this evil, is subservience to the general good, brings a particular obligation upon men in civilised society, to concur for the immediate extinction of the evil wherever it appears.—Bp. Horsley.

THE LIBERATION OF SLAVES.—Verses 12-17.

Slavery existed among the Hebrews in a totally distinct spirit and method from modern slavery. Human traffic and human cruelty were punished and forbidden (cf. Ex. xxi. 26; Lev. xxv. 39-43), servitude was limited in time

and relieved by a spirit of generosity. Beyond six years' service a Jewish bondman need not go. The Sabbatic year brought liberty, if he thought fit to claim it. Provision was not only made for the forgiveness of debts, but for the freedom of debtors. There was *personal* release, hence learn—

**I. The infinite value God sets upon man.** Kidnapping was a most atrocious crime in the time of Moses. In Egypt, bloody wars were carried on for that purpose, and in heathen countries slaves offered for sale were obtained in this way. Kidnapping is a crime against the person only a little short of murder, since it deprives of liberty, which makes life dear. Many would prefer death to slavery. It is a calamity most terrible, inflicting misery for life. "The sum of all villainies," says Wesley. God has made man in His own image, and exalted him above the brutes. The poorest and most enslaved are stamped with divine value. He that diminishes this value and looks upon his fellow men as "goods and chattels," he that mutilates or injures them will be amenable to "the Judge of all."

**II. The wonderful provision God has made for man's freedom.** Freedom is the birthright of man; it should neither be bartered nor taken away by violence. If lost at any time through temporary causes, it must not be forgotten nor destroyed. In these demands for the rights of slaves we see the wisdom of the Divine Lawgiver, the rectitude of His laws, and the natural rights of His creatures. We are reminded also of provision in Jesus Christ, not from temporal but spiritual bondage—a provision (1) universal, (2) free, and (3) divine. "He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, deliverance to the captives," etc. (Luke iv. 18, 19).

**III. The true spirit with which this freedom must be granted.** The value of a gift often depends upon the spirit in which it is bestowed. 1. *The spirit of love.* "Thy brother." We must forgive, love, and help as brethren. "All things are easy to love," says Augustine. When Achilles was asked what works he found most easy, he answered, "Those which I undertake for my friends." 2. *The spirit of forgiveness.* However great the loan or debt, it must be forgiven. "The highest exercise of charity is charity towards the uncharitable. (Buckminster.) 3. *The spirit of liberality.* Liberality ungrudging. "Thine heart shall not be grieved" (verse 10); disinterested, "open thine hand wide;" extensive, "lend him sufficient for his need" (verse 8). "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." 4. *The spirit of gratitude.* "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt" (verse 15.) God delivered them from bondage and enriched them with spoils. What base ingratitude to be insensible for mercies received! What sin not to acknowledge or repay them! As God treats us so we must treat one another. Forgive without reluctance and request; help liberally and cheerfully and God's blessing will rest upon us and upon our posterity.

#### PERPETUAL SERVICE CHOSEN.—Verses 16–18.

The Hebrew slave was kindly treated, might actually love his master and value the security which he enjoyed in his service more than freedom. He might be unwilling to break up the family, and wish to remain for ever in his servitude. "If he say, I will not go away from thee," etc. Then a formal act was necessary to seal the covenant.

**I. The spirit in which the servitude was chosen.** 1. It was a *voluntary* choice. "I will not go." The master did not compel the slave to stay. God

does not rule us by force and physical law, like stars and seas. There is no true service where there is compulsion. Jesus appeals to the will. "*Will ye be my disciples?*" 2. It was a *choice of love*. "He loveth thee and thine house." Affection may grow up between slaves and masters. The Roman slaves would endure severest tortures rather than betray or accuse their owners. If the law of love ruled more in domestic affairs, between masters and servants, employers and employed, it would sweeten toil and secure peace and prosperity. "God counts that free service which love dictates and not necessity."—(*Augustine*.) "*Lovest thou me.*"

What love can do, that dares love attempt.—*Shakspeare*.

**II. The badge by which it was distinguished.** Voluntary sacrifice of freedom was ratified by a significant ceremony and distinguished by a certain mark. The servant's ear was put to the door-post and bored through with an awl, by the sanctions of the judges (*cf.* Ex. xxi. 5, 6). If the process was not painful, there was a manifest dishonour willingly endured. We have to bear the cross to endure shame and reproach, if not bodily sufferings, for our Divine Master. Slaves were branded by their owners. Paul gloried in the *marks* (stigmas, brands) of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi. 17). Let us give ourselves to Him, delight in His service, and never be afraid nor ashamed to confess Him before men.

### THE SABBATH YEAR.—*Verses 1-18.*

This year, like the Jubilee, was a memorable time. Regarding it in its evangelical aspects, notice—

**I. The method of introducing it.** A solemn, loud and universal proclamation was made. A type of the earnest and importunate call of the gospel—the "glad tidings of great joy." The priests, not civil magistrates, were to make the proclamation. They acted by the authority of God. Ministers must preach the gospel in God's name to every creature.

**II. The blessings which it brought.** These symbolise the blessings of redemption in Christ Jesus. 1. *Release from debt*. "In whom we have forgiveness of sins." 2. *Removal from bondage*. Introduction to a new condition, a fresh start in life. "Liberty wherewith Christ makes us free." 3. *Checks to evil*. By extirpating evil from the "heart" and "eye," by cultivating kindly feeling and uniting into one common brotherhood. 4. *Establishment of peace and repose*. Peace among men; repose amidst agitation and revolution in society, amidst pressure of population, unequal distribution of wealth and the selfishness of mankind. Christianity allies itself with everything that is free, generous and just. Let it shed its own glorious light on home and workshop, in social customs and civil laws. Then truth and righteousness will advance, and angels again may sing "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will amongst men."

### DEDICATION OF THE FIRSTBORN.—*Verses 19-23.*

"First fruits" seem to be the offerings of natural piety among all nations. God demanded from Israel the setting apart (Ex. xiii. 11) and the consecration of the firstborn of man and beast.

**I. As a divine claim upon all.** The first and choicest of all we have—property, time, intellect, wealth and affections must be given to His service.



No bullock did servile work. Nothing must be given to the world. God has a perfect right to all redeemed life. This life should be without blemish and offence. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."

II. As a representative of entire consecration. The first represents the whole. Only a whole or perfect creature could represent the offering of a man's heart and life to God (Mat. i. 8). Nothing must be kept back—"All for Jesus." "Present your *bodies* (i.e., yourselves, your persons) a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (Rom. xii. 1).

III. As an indication of the spirit of the worshipper. References to passages will show the frequency of these injunctions, and the danger there was of disregarding them. 1. *A spirit of holiness*. There must be no legal defect, no blemish in the offerings. God demands rectitude of heart and life. 2. *A spirit of readiness*. There must be no forgetfulness, no unwillingness, but readiness to offer. "Thou shalt not *delay* to offer the first of thy ripe fruits" (Ex. xxii. 29). 3. *A spirit of fellowship*. The offering of the firstborn brought them into God's presence, taught dependence upon Him, and was a means of intercourse with God.

IV. As a type of the perfect offering of Jesus. Christ was the firstborn of all creatures—a sacrifice, a substitute for us, without spot or blemish. To Him all firstlings and firstborn pointed. He offered Himself to God in life and death, and with Him was God well pleased. "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 12-15. *Freedom*. I. Condition from which released. Debt, bondage and degradation. A picture of helpless sinners, sold under sin, and indebted to law. II. Method of release by divine appointment and proclamation. "The Lord's release." *The release of bond-servants*. In this ordinance we may see—I. An encouraging emblem. It represents—1. The redemption which God vouchsafes to His people. 2. The mercy which He exercises towards His redeemed. II. An instructive lesson. We are to regard God's mercies as—1. A pattern for our imitation. 2. A notice for our exertion.—*Rev. C. Simeon, M.A.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Poverty*. 1. A test of civility and kindness. 2. A touchstone of friendship and sympathy. 3. A reminder of life's changes. "He travels safe and not unpleasantly, who is guarded by poverty and guided by love."—*Sir P. Sidney*.

Vers. 16, 17. *Voluntary servitude*. 1. The Master loved. "He loveth thee," good, lenient and kind. When we enter the service of any master we enquire after his character, the nature of his employment, the support which he affords, and the rewards which he offers. Jesus is our Master, our only Master, good and powerful. 2. The service entered. Reasonable, cheerful, and life-long. God's service is perfect freedom, holy and satisfactory. Enter this service now. Continue in it "unto the end."

Vers. 19-23. *Dedications of firstlings*. 1. In remembrance of deliverance from the house of bondage. That which is spared by special providence should be solemnly dedicated to God. Hence—2. This claim of the firstborn rests upon divine goodness and grace. Not upon the natural proprietorship of God as Creator of all things; but upon the grace of the call. Israel was

a consecrated because a redeemed people. Because Jehovah had delivered their firstborn, they were to be sanctified to Him." "It is mine."

Ver. 21. *Blemished life.* 1. God only accepts the perfect. 2. God has given the perfect, through which He will bless man. Man is guilty before God. Cannot offer the fruit of his body, the firstlings of his flocks, for the sin of his soul. But in Jesus "our

righteousness," we are accepted and blessed.

Ver. 23. *Blood.* 1. Blood spilt, life lost, death deserved through guilt. 2. The animal offered, atonement made for guilt. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. xvii. 10, 11).

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1. *Release.* It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in everything great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom.—*R. Hall.*

Vers. 2-4. *Creditor.* There is greatness in being generous, and there is only simple justice in satisfying creditors. Generosity is the part of the soul raised above the vulgar.—*Goldsmith.*

Ver. 4. *Bless thee.* If then we will needs lay up, where should we rather repose it, than in the Christian's treasury? The poor man's hand is the treasury of Christ. All my superfluity shall be hoarded up, where I know it will be safely kept.—*Bp. Hall.*

Vers. 7-11. *Not a thought in thy wicked heart.* Extreme vigour is sure to arm everything against it, and at

length to relax into supreme neglect. (*Burke*). A desire to resist oppression is implanted in the nature of man.—*Tacitus.*

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;  
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.  
*T. Gray.*

Ver. 8. *Open thine hand.* Howard's rule—so nobly expounded by his own self-denying devotedness—is a fine comment on this. "That our own superfluities give way to other men's convenience; that our conveniences give way to other men's necessities; and that our necessities give way to other men's extremities." (Quoted by *Bridge*). *Thy poor brother.* Why should I for a little difference in this one particular, of worldly wealth, despise my poor brother? When so many and great things unite us, shall wealth only disunite us? One sun shines on both, one blood bought us both; one heaven will receive us both; only he hath not so much of earth as I, and possibly much more of Christ. And why should I disdain him on earth, whom haply the Lord will advance above me in heaven.—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Ver. 10. *Give him.* There cannot be a more glorious object in creation than a human being, replete with benevolence, meditating in what manner he might render himself most acceptable

to his Creator, by doing most good to His creatures. (*Fielding*.) Nothing is more conformable to God's nature, or renders us more like Him than beneficence.—*Barrow*.

Vers. 16–18. *Not go away*. Servitude seizes on few, but many seize on her.—*Seneca*.

James II., on his death-bed, thus addressed his son, "There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." "A good servant," says Luther, "is a real God-send; but truly, it is a rare bird in the land." "If I had served my God as faithfully as my king, He would not have thus forsaken me."

## CHAPTER XVI.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The religious ordinances to be observed in Canaan are continued. Three great festivals are prominently mentioned—Feast of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Former regulations concerning them are presupposed (Ex. xii., Lev. xxiii., Num. xxviii. and xxix.), and attention is drawn to certain additional particulars.

1-8. **The Feast of Passover.** *Abib*, first month of the ecclesiastical year, corresponds with our April (Ex. xii. 2; xiii. 4). Passover, prepare, *i.e.*, keep the Passover in its widest sense, including not only the paschal lamb, but sacrifices and offerings during the seven days.

2. **Sacrifice**, *i.e.*, offer sacrifices proper to the feast (Num. xxviii. 19-26).

3. **Affliction**. Israel had to leave in anxious flight and were unable to leaven the dough. This reminds them of oppression and deliverance from it.

4. **Leavened**. A repetition of two points in the observance. No leaven to be seen for the seven days (Ex. xiii. 7); and none of the flesh of the paschal lamb was to be left till the next morning (Ex. xxiii. 18). Coasts, borders, districts.

5. **Gates**. The place is fixed. The slaughtering, sacrificing, roasting and eating were to take place at the sanctuary, not as formerly, in different houses.

6. **Thy tents**, not to their homes in the country but their lodgings near the sanctuary. "Other paschal offerings were yet to be offered day by day for seven days, and the people would remain to share them, and especially to take part in the holy convocation on the first and seventh days. The expression, 'unto thy tents,' means simply 'to thy dwellings,' as in 1 Kings viii. 66. The use of 'tents' as a synonym for 'dwellings,' (*cf.* Is. xvi. 5) is a trace of the original nomadic life of the people." (*Speak. Com.*)

9-13. **Feast of weeks**—*Seven weeks*, called feast of weeks, week of weeks (Ex. xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 10; Acts ii. 1-4). Begin, *lit.* "from the beginning of the sickle to the corn"—*i.e.*, from beginning of corn harvest. Corn harvest began by the presentation of the sheaf of first-fruits on the second day of the Passover, which agrees with the time in Lev. xxiii. 15.

10. **Tribute**. A word which is only used here, and signifies sufficiency, need. "Israel was to keep this feast with sacrificial gifts, which everyone was able to bring according to the extent to which the Lord had blessed him, and—"

11. To rejoice before the Lord at the place where His name dwelt with sacrificial meals, to which the needy were to be invited (*cf.* xiv. 29), in remembrance of the fact that they also were bondsmen in Egypt." (*Del.*) Rejoice, *i.e.*, honour the Lord with sacred songs.

13-15. **Feast of Tabernacles**. This was observed at the end of harvest after the corn had been gathered in. Nothing fresh is added except the appointment of the place and the attendance of domestics, portionless Levites, the stranger, fatherless and widow.

16. Three times a year the males were to attend. "Women were not commanded to undertake the journey, partly from natural weakness of their sex, and partly on account of domestic cares." None must appear empty. Gifts must be offered according to God's blessing upon each.



18-20. Officers formerly appointed to aid Moses in settlement of disputes were sufficient while they were in the wilderness. In Canaan a different arrangement will be required. Judges—the *Shoterim*, officers (*lit.* writers, see Ex. v. 6) who were associated with the judges, according to chap. i. 15, even under the previous arrangement, were not merely messengers and servants of the courts, but secretaries and advisers of the judges, who derived their title from the fact that they had to draw up and keep the genealogical lists, and who are mentioned as already existing in Egypt as overseers of the people and their work. (*Keil*). Gates. The place of public resort and court-house of Eastern cities. No rule is given for the number. They were to be just in their decisions; not to respect persons, nor take gifts. Grove, a group of trees, adorned with altars, and dedicated to a particular deity, or a wooden image in a grove (Jud. vi. 25; 2 Kings xxiii. 4-6). These places were strong allurements to idolatry. Image. Statue, pillar, or memorial stone dedicated to Baal. See Ex. xxiii. 24; Lev. xxvi. 1; 2 Kings x. 26; Hos. x. 1; Micah v. 12.

### THE PASSOVER.—Verses 1-8.

The Passover is one of the most important of all feasts. In its design and circumstances it is most impressive, solemn, and full of instruction to the Christian. Its lessons are repeated in the New Testament and embodied in the great work of the Redeemer.

I. The feast in its design. Hearers are supposed to be well informed concerning these ordinances. But “a re-inforcement of this ordinance was the more necessary because its observance had clearly been intermitted for thirty-nine years. One passover only had been kept in the wilderness, that recorded in Num. ix.” (*Speak. Com.*) 1. *To commemorate wonderful deliverance.* For “the Lord thy God brought thee out of Egypt.” Deliverance from bondage, from Pharaoh, cruel task masters, from scenes of horror and ghastly death which no imagination can depict. God is in history, working death for the sinner and life for the believer. “He can create and He destroy.” 2. *To celebrate a new birth.* The deliverance marks a new era in Jewish history. “History herself was born on that night when Moses led forth his countrymen from the land of Goschen,” says Bunsen. Hence the month of its occurrence is the beginning of the sacred year. “This month shall be to you the beginning (the head) of months” (Ex. xii. 1). The day of deliverance was the beginning of national life, and its observance was “the celebration of the day of independence.” Men only begin to live when they are converted to God, and redeemed from sin. Then they are new creatures, one people under Jehovah their King. No longer enslaved, they are led forth to victory, and to a land which God gives for an heritage for ever.

II. The feast in its circumstances of time and place. These are specific. 1. *The time.* “In the month Abib,” (Ex. xiii. 4), from March to April in the spring of the year, when barley ripens and nature assumes its beauty, a fit picture of that new life bestowed in redemption, a striking proof of harmony between the works of God and the wonders of grace. God in wisdom connects the celebration of the nation’s birth with the regeneration of nature (Is. xliii. 1, 15-17). 2. *The place.* “In the place which the Lord shall choose.” The place was chosen and sanctified by God Himself. Formerly they met and partook of sacrifice in their own homes. Now all males had to appear in the sanctuary. They were thus confined to appoint places kept from self-will and foolish devices, and governed by one law of worship. We must ever recognise God in the solemnity of the place where He puts His name. No sacrifice is accepted unless presented on the altar which sacrifices it. 3. *Its duration.* Seven days, and the last, the seventh, was a day of solemn assembly in which no servile work was done. “A holy convocation,” a special season of social intercourse and devotion.

III. The feast in its typical meaning. As a sacred memorial to be continually observed, it reminds of many events and sets forth many truths. 1. *It was a type of Christ*—the lamb slain for us, by whose blood we are sprinkled (Heb. xii. 24; 1 Pet. i. 2), and in whom we have redemption. In Him is created a people, a nation of kings and priests to God, to whom belong freedom, holiness, and honour. "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). 2. *It was a symbol of Christian fellowship.* The lamb was not eaten alone, but in families and by companies at first. In later times it was slain at the altar, yet eaten at the table. In the Christian Church we have a fellowship of redeemed souls, bought with a price and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In Christ we have one faith, one baptism, one hope, and one home. At His table we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and cultivate that feeling which is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

### THE REDEMPTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

In the deliverance of Israel from bondage, we have a type of greater deliverance in Christ's redemption through His blood.

I. Redemption by great sacrifice. Egypt lost her firstborn—firstborn of man and beast. What a ghastly scene, death everywhere! What a loss, what a sacrifice for the freedom of the oppressed! "I gave Egypt for thy ransom" (Isa. xliii. 3). But how great the price of our redemption! Paul obtained his Roman privileges "with a great sum" (Acts xxii. 28). Our deliverance cost the life of the Son of God. "Who gave Himself a ransom for all."

II. Redemption by great power. In the great deliverance which made Israel free, God was manifest in every step. 1. *It was timely.* It was a "night" of despair and distress, a night of thick darkness. But God never forgets His promise; times all events and works deliverance in His own way. "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses." "Even the self-same day it came to pass" (Ex. xii. 41). 2. *It was miraculous.* God accomplished what Moses and Aaron could not. They were saved from plagues, from death of the firstborn, from a watery grave and a mighty foe. "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. Now shalt thou see what I will do" (Ex. v. 23; vi. 1). All enemies must fall and all difficulties vanish before Omnipotence." "For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place" (Ex. xiii. 3).

III. Redemption commemorated. "Observe the month and keep the Passover." This has no common event, but a special display of Divine power towards a helpless people. "It was a memorable night—'a night of observations,' that night of the Lord" (Ex. xii. 42). God's mercies in providence and grace should be remembered. 1. Gratefully. 2. Continually. 3. Socially. As long as Jewish polity existed the Passover was to be observed. "Ye shall keep it a feast throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Ex. xii. 14; Lev. xxiii. 4).

IV. Redemption a motive to consecrated life. Israel were bought and claimed by God for Himself and no other. "I will redeem you, and I will take you to me for a people." If we have been delivered from the captivity of Satan, the bondage and corruption of sin, we must live to God. No longer in Egypt, no longer our own, but a new life—a life of righteousness, faith, and obedience in Christ. Life through Christ is a redemptive force, the motive

power, the Divine impulse to a higher destiny. Moral suasion, moral stimulants, moral laws, can never work out moral freedom and beget moral character. "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

### UNLEAVENED BREAD.

What does this unleavened bread mean? Two things, I think. First, *Christ*; for He is the believer's food. The unleavened bread sets forth Christ in one aspect, as much as the lamb sets Him forth in another. The main portion of the feast was the flesh of the lamb, for which the life of the redeemed was derived. In the Israelite feeding upon unleavened bread, we have presented to us the believer drawing his strength from Jesus, the spotless and holy one—the unleavened bread. "I am the bread of life." But there is another meaning of the unleavened bread, and that is *holiness*, uprightness, singleness of eye. Just as the bread was not the main staple of the passover feast, but the lamb, so holiness is the accompaniment rather than the principal portion of the Christian feast. In the case of every believer the unleavened bread must accompany feeding upon Christ as the lamb. God has joined these two things together, let us not put them asunder. If we are redeemed by the blood of the lamb, let us live upon the unleavened bread; let us show forth the sincerity and truth which God requires in our life. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7).—*From Step. A. Blackwood.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1, 2.** *The appointed ordinance.* 1. *Obligatory*, appointed by direct authority of God. "Observe, thou shalt sacrifice." It should always be a privilege, but God makes it a duty to remember providential deliverances. The observance is not optional, a matter of convenience, but a necessity. 2. *Universal*. Offspring reap benefits given to ancestors. Ordinances bind families to each other and to God. 3. *Perpetual* in Jewish Church. Not only in the night of deliverance, but annually in the journeys of the wilderness, and "for ever" in Canaan. Christians will thus celebrate the Lord's supper to the end of time, and in heaven for ever will they praise their Redeemer.

**Ver. 2.** *Of the flock.* 1. The lamb slain. 2. The blood sprinkled. 3. The flesh eaten. Deliverance possible through it, the Lamb of God. But the blood must be sprinkled and spiritual strength sustained. The pro-

visions of the atonement must be applied to the need of the soul. "By one we enter into the divine covenant, and by the other are made partakers of the divine nature."

**Ver. 4.** *Unleavened bread.* 1. Affliction. "The bread of affliction." 2. Haste. "For thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste." 3. Purity. No decay, no corruption, the purity of new life. No leaven in heart, home and assembly. "Watch carefully against corruption in life and doctrine, be punctual in your preparation to and participation of the Christian passover."—*Trapp.*

"At the going down of the sun" (ver. 6), between three and six o'clock in the evening. This corresponds with the ninth hour of the great atonement day, when Jesus, the Lamb of God, cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost."

**Ver. 8.** *A solemn assembly.* Ob-



served personally, publicly and socially. Those who violate the Sabbath and neglect religious ordinances disobey God and endanger the welfare of the nation.

Vers. 1-8. We may learn—1. That there is no service without separation from the world. 2. That separation

from the world is only accomplished by God's help. 3. That the consequences of separation must be sanctification to God. (1) By self surrender. (2) By continual obedience. Or—1. Christian life is of divine origin. 2. Christian life is social in its nature. 3. Christian life is supreme in our conduct.

### THE FEAST OF WEEKS.—Verses 9-12.

*Pentecost* signifies *fiftieth*. This feast was held seven weeks (a week of weeks) after the Passover, counting from the second day of that feast. It is called "the feast of harvest" (Ex. xxiii. 16). On this fiftieth day the second festival commenced by the offer of two loaves of fine flour, "which were the first fruits of the wheat harvest" (Lev. xxiii. 17). The feast was to be kept by sacrificial gifts and joy.

I. A festival of joy. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." 1. *The joy of harvest*. Joy after severe toil and long patience—joy in reaping the results of labour and enjoying the bounty of God—the joy of public thanksgiving. "They joy before thee according to the joy of harvest" (Isa. ix. 3).

Now o'er the corn the sturdy farmer looks,  
And swells with satisfaction to behold  
The plenteous harvest which repays his toil.  
We, too, are gratified, and feel a joy  
Inferior but to his, partakers all  
Of the rich bounty Providence has strew'd  
In plentiful profusion o'er the field.—*Hurdia*.

2. *Joy of social intercourse*. Thou, thy son and daughter, thy domestics, strangers, and fatherless (verse 11). Goodwill and kindness to men were manifested in these festivals. Our joys are increased by letting others share them. "Happiness was born a twin," says Byron. The blessings of God upon us, should create a glad heart, a radiant countenance, and a liberal hand.

II. An acknowledgement of dependence upon God. This festival was a national and devout expression of their dependence upon God for the fruits of the earth and the possession of their privileges. The Jew was not permitted to touch his crop until he had presented the first fruits. "This," says a writer, "was a beautiful institution, to teach the Israelites that it was not the soil, nor the raindrops, nor the sunbeams, nor the dews, nor the skill of their agriculturists, that they had to thank for their bounteous produce, but that they must rise above the sower and reaper, and see God, the giver of the golden harvest, and make His praise the key-note to their harvest home."

III. A memorial of great events. Two grand events seem to be referred to. 1. *Deliverance from bondage*. "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt." To stimulate gratitude to God and liberality to men. 2. *The giving of the law*. The law was given from Sinai on the fiftieth day from Egypt. These stated celebrations would commemorate and authenticate ancient events. Written records are not always safe; get corrupted or lost, and only impress the few who read them. But general celebrations of a nation's birth and history recall to gratitude and keep alive a conscious dependence upon Divine providence. The exodus of Israel is not a matter of curious antiquity.

but of world interest. The giving of the law and the miracles of early history are revelations of God to man, an evidence that heaven and earth are near to each other in government and purpose.

IV. A type of Pentecost in the Christian Church. It was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was poured out and new power bestowed on the Church. As "the first fruits" of the earth were presented of old, so the first fruits from heaven were gathered in by the conversion of three thousand from "every nation under heaven." The thunders of Sinai were hushed by the mighty wind at Jerusalem, and the curse of the Law contrasted by the blessings of the gospel. "The voice of words" is followed by "the tongue of fire."

### THE TRIBUTE OF FREEWILL.—Verse 10.

In the sacrifices there must not only be devout acknowledgement of Divine goodness, but voluntary dedication to God.

I. Our offerings must be presented with a willing mind. "A free will offering." The heart must be touched before the gift is taken by "the hand." There must be no hesitation, no constraint. Without this, whatever be the value of the gift, and the splendour of the altar on which it is put, there can be no acceptance." Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7).

II. Our offerings should be proportionate to God's blessing upon us. This frees us from all excuse. We can give something. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Think of God's mercies. 1. *In ordinary affairs.* In our harvests and families, in prosperous trades and professions. In the comforts and privileges of life. What shall we render to God for these? 2. *In special providences.* Many like Israel have special deliverances to commemorate, almost miraculous escapes from danger and death. These should affect our hearts "Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly." "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee" (verse 17).

III. Our offerings should be an expression of the subjection of our will to God's will. If we love God we shall obey Him. Our hearts and gifts will be presented without delay. But if we hate God and forget His mercies, we shall withhold His due. The mind is discovered by its expressions, the willingness measured by the quality of the offering. Gifts full and free indicate gratitude and readiness to please; gifts blemished and stingy prove lack of reverence and submission to God. If we render not according to God's blessing upon us we may lose all we have. "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10, 11. *Keep the feast.* 1. *In national union.* All the tribes, rich and poor, were to go up to Jerusalem, and there proclaim in united gatherings their dependence upon God. National unity was recognised by worship to a common Redeemer. 2. *In national joy.* They must rejoice in receiving from and giving to God, and in helping one another. (a) *Sacred joy.* "Rejoice

before the Lord thy God." True joy is a serious thing (*Bonar*). Worldly joy is like a shallow brook, deceptive and gliding away. (b) *Social joy*. All within the family and in the gates were to rejoice together. Common mercies should create common joys. 3. *In national beneficence*. Servants, Levites and strangers, the widow and the fatherless, must be remembered. The wants of the needy must be supplied. The law of beneficence then as always must be "as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

*Feast of first fruits*. The appointment of these feasts may be considered as—I. *Commemorative*: Of the day on which they came out of Egypt, and of the day on which they

received the law. II. *Typical*: Of the Resurrection, and of the descending of the Spirit on the Apostles. III. *Instructive*: Of our obligations and duty towards God.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

Vers. 9–11. The feast of Pentecost prefigured the mission of the Holy Spirit. *The first fruits of the Spirit* which followed that sacred day on which the law was given, and by which *the spirit of bondage* was introduced, as it also prefigured the first fruits of the new church (Acts ii.), and of the Ministry of the Apostles, and of that new bread with which the Jews first, and then the Gentiles were to be fed.—*Spanheim, Chron. Sac.*

#### THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.—Verses 13–15.

This festival was instituted in grateful commemoration of the security of Israel when dwelling in booths or tabernacles in the wilderness. It began on the 15th day of the month Tisri (from the end of our September and beginning of October), and lasted a week. It was celebrated only at the sanctuary. Offerings were presented on the altar every day and booths were used, on the housetops, in the streets, or in the fields for the dwelling of the people. (Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh. viii. 15, 16.)

I. *A Feast of Ingathering*. "After that thou hast gathered in thy corn and wine." There was no disappointment, no failure in the crops. In these "harvest homes," each season was marked with devout recognition of God's providence. In the Passover the sickle "was put to the corn." In Pentecost the cereal crops were harvested, and now in the Feast of Tabernacles, everything was gathered in, securely stored, and the husbandman rewarded for his toil. "Thou shalt keep the feast of ingathering in the end of the year when thou hast gathered in thy labours." (Ex. xxiii. 16.)

II. *A time of universal joy*. "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast." Gladness was a special characteristic of this autumnal gathering, it was a standing type of festivity, and there was a standing proverb that "He who had never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam (a ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles) had never seen rejoicing in his life." The joy was on two accounts. 1. *For the past*. For God's miraculous deliverance and guidance through the wilderness. For the corn, wine and oil, and the produce of the land. What a contrast between the land of promise and the desert draught! 2. *For the future*. God opened up a bright prospect. They were to rejoice in hope and expectation of further blessings. "Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase," etc. (ver. 15). God's people are commanded and should always be a cheerful people to "rejoice evermore, to rejoice in the Lord always."

III. *A Memorial of Pilgrim Life*. "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of



the land of Egypt" (Lev. xxiii. 43). The people left their homes and abode in "tabernacles." "The feast typifies this our pilgrim state, the life of simple faith in God, for which God provides; poor in this world's goods but rich in God. The church militant dwells as it were in tabernacles; hereafter in hope to be *received into everlasting habitations* in the Church triumphant. It was the link which bound on their deliverance from Egypt to the close of their pilgrim life, and their entrance into rest. The yearly commemoration of it was not only a thanksgiving for God's past mercies, it was a confession also of their present relation to God, that here *we have no continuing city*; that they still needed the guidance and support of God; and that their trust was not in themselves nor in man, but in Him."—*Dr. Pusey.*

**IV. A type of Heaven.** The booths on earth were frail, temporary and easily destroyed. "For a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and rain" (Is. iv. 6.) But there is "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." The rest of Canaan typified the rest of heaven, the eternal home of the Christian pilgrim; where there are no tents, no wanderings and no sorrows; no thirst, no pain, no sin, no death. The convocation reminds us of "the general assembly" in the celestial city. In this world we are "strangers and sojourners," let us prepare for the final ingathering of the fruits of God's grace.

#### THE THREE ANNUAL GATHERINGS.—*Verses 16, 17.*

The rules concerning the three feasts are here summed up as in *Ex. xxiii. 16, 17; xxxiv. 23.* All males must appear. None must appear empty. All must give according to God's blessing upon them. View these gatherings—

**I. In their fixed periods.** There was nothing arbitrary. The seasons corresponded to yearly epochs natural to an agricultural people. There is, something that may worthily bring them together. The energy which slept in the powers of nature, and which gradually developed in the produce of the seasons was the same which was roused in terror to destroy their foes. The god of nature was the moral governor of mankind. "The great fact of a moral government which men are perpetually forgetting, was, in the institutions of one people, linked on to those constantly recurring periods which man's physical wants will not allow him to neglect, and thus challenged their attention, and if anything could, coloured as it were, and inoculated their whole consciousness."

**II. In promoting commercial prosperity.** Facilities for buying and selling for mutual intercourse and trade were great. "Such festivals," says a writer, "have always been attended with this effect. The famous old fair near Hebron arose from the congregating of pilgrims to the famous terebinth-tree of Abraham. The yearly fairs of the Germans are said to have had a similar origin and so the annual pilgrimage of the Mohammedans to Mecca, in spite of many adverse circumstances, has given birth to one of the greatest markets in the Eastern world. Thus, perhaps, more of the wealth of the Jews and of the greatness and glory of Jerusalem is to be traced to the simple laws of this one chapter than to all the wisdom and power of either or all of their kings."

**III. In cementing national unity.** Three times a year did rich and poor meet in one place and on one common ground. Great multitudes would see each other and have opportunity of knowing each other. They would become interested in one another's welfare and a bond of brotherhood would be formed to

counteract schism and rebellion. Union gave firmness and solidity to the nation. One spirit cemented and animated all the tribes. Community of principles, fellowship in festivals and privileges bound all in one compact family. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

**IV. In preserving the religious sentiment.** They were reminded of God in every feast, sacrifice, and offering. Faith, gratitude, love, and all the religious feelings, would be quickened and rightly centred. In their annual worship, God, the one supreme object, was kept before them. In their habitual charity they recognised the claims of the poor. Thus, in its twofold aspects towards God and man, their religion was strengthened to govern individual, social, and national life. Our religion must be the sovereign of the soul, ruling all life and controlling all its activities.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 13-15. National philanthropy.**

1. When God blesses a nation with prosperity He demands its liberality. Wealth, corn and wine are given not for selfish, but for useful purposes. Covetousness plans for selfish ends, benevolence should counter plan and organize resources for objects of divine philanthropy. 2. This liberality should be displayed to the nation's own poor. (a.) In social feasts. "Rejoice in thy feast." (b.) In benevolence to all classes. Those related and those not related (ver. 14). God has identified himself with the orphans and the poor, and delegated them to receive bounty meant for himself (Jas. ii. 5). The poor in our families, churches and nation have the first claim. "Charity begins at home."

Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,  
His country next, and next all human race.

*Pope.*

**Ver. 16. Three times a year.** The chief objects of the feast. 1. To recount God's mercies. 2. To enhance the piety and patriotism of the people. 3. To promote friendly intercourse among families and sections and thus 4. To aid in preserving the society of the Church and the nation. (*S. S. Journal*). The connection of the feasts with the Life of Jesus. *The Passover.* Jesus and the cross. *The Pentecost.* Jesus and the Holy Spirit. *The Tabernacles.* Jesus and our heavenly home.—*S. S. Journal.*

**Appear before the Lord.** The journey to Jerusalem pictured in "the Songs of Degrees" (Ps. 120-134).

*The twofold aspects of the Feasts.*

1. Looking back to deliverance. 2. Looking forward in hope of entering the "house not made with hands," of being "gathered into the Lord's garner."

**Vers. 16, 17. Not appear empty.** Viewed religiously, the festivals were annual national thanksgivings for mercies received, both natural and miraculous—the first from the commencement of harvest and the deliverance out of Egypt; the second for the completion of the grain harvest and the passage of the Red Sea; the third for the final gathering in of the fruits and the many mercies of the wilderness. At such seasons we must not "appear before God empty," we must give Him not only "the salves of our lips," but some substantial acknowledgment of His goodness towards us. (*Com. for English Readers*).

*Not empty.* 1. An offering to be brought. 2. An offering for each individual. 3. An offering according to the ability of each. 4. An offering to the Lord (a) as an acknowledgment of His mercy, (b) as an expression of gratitude. Gifts are the natural results of gratitude and joy. "Bring an offering and come into His courts" (Ps. cxlv. 8).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.—Verses 18-20.

These words with the four next chapters give certain directions for the administration of justice. While Moses lived, he himself specially taught of God, was sufficient. But the people were soon to be scattered in the land and would no longer be encamped together, hence regular and permanent provision must be made for future order in civil and social government.

**I. Right men must be chosen.** The nation must select its own judges and officers, secretaries and advisers of judges, and every place was now to have its own administration. Imperfect sinful men were to be entrusted with solemn duty, to represent God and train up a nation in righteousness and truth.

**II. These men must judge with impartial spirit.** God seeks to implant right principles and cultivate right dispositions in men. Good laws must be rightly administered. Corruption and tyranny must disgrace no community, ruler, or subject. 1. *No injustice.* "They shall judge the people with just judgment." 2. *No perversion of judgment.* "Thou shalt not wrest judgment" (verse 19) in social, civil, or religious matters. 3. *No partiality.* "Thou shalt not respect persons," rich or poor. "Hear the small as well as the great, be not afraid of the face of man for the judgment is God's" (Deut. i. 16, 17). 4. *No bribery.* "Neither take a gift." Pure justice was not often administered. Corruption was prevalent in Hebrew, as well as Oriental judges, was one of the crying evils which provoked God's anger against his people and led first to the Babylonian captivity, and afterwards to the Roman conquest. 5. *Nothing but right.* "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow," literally *justice, justice*; "the repetition for the sake of emphasis and solemnity. God is just, and at the great day will give to everyone his due. He should therefore rule and stay in fear of Him." "Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chr. xix. 5-7).

"Mercy more becomes a magistrate  
Than the vindictive wrath which men call justice!"—Longfellow.

**III. The blessings which follow justice rightly administered.** Right performance of duty always brings pleasure and reward. 1. *Life is relieved.* Evils are prevalent enough, without increasing them by official injustice. The purpose of government is to remove unjust burdens, to encourage progress, and reconcile all classes. "Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants" says Burke. "That thou mayest live." 2. *Inheritance is secured.* Strife and enmity, robbery and injustice, create disorder and endanger life and property. Righteous laws duly administered bring peace to the city, give security to the throne, and stability to the state. "Inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." 3. *Society is improved.* When vice is unchecked and virtue neglected, when judgment is perverted and authority set at naught, there can be no improvement and progress in society. Wealth does not christianise, change does not ameliorate society. Laws must command good and forbid evil, punish transgression and reward obedience. "The function of a government," says Gladstone, "is to make it easy for people to do good, and difficult for them to do evil." "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil" (Rom. xiii. 3).



IDOLATRY FORBIDDEN.—*Verses 21, 22.*

In giving practical directions for the administration of justice, Moses begins by denouncing idolatry, which is rebellion against supreme power. They are neither to plant groves, nor set up pillars in the worship of God.

**I. Idolatry is enticing.** This on many accounts. 1. By its *prevalence*. In some form or other it is the most popular religion in the world. Men bow down to the idols of luxury, ambition, pleasure and avarice. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god" (Mic. iv. 5). 2. By its *use*. We naturally forsake God and cling to sin. Evil inclination leads to wrong choice, and men chose darkness rather than light.

**II. Idolatry is treason against God.** God is the sum of all moral qualities, the proprietor of all resources, and the giver of all existences. What more rational than to worship Him? We are bound, *obligated* to love Him. Nothing belies God, nor degrades man like the worship of images and statues. This is treason against heaven, the firstborn of all folly, the total of all absurdities. "An idol is nothing."

**III. Idolatry must be utterly forsaken.** We must neither join the worshippers nor sanction the worship. Plant no grove of trees, for truth loves light and reproves dark. Set up no image by hands or in imagination. We must not enquire for idols, transfer our affections to them, nor address our prayers to them. God's people are forbidden to examine or look at them. "Turn ye not (face not) unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods. I am the Lord your God." (Lev. xix. 4.)

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 18-20. Judges and Justice.**

1. The supremacy of justice and right outweighed all personal considerations, all private pleasures and friendships. Right must be upheld and honoured. 2. The method of upholding justice. By imperfect men, chosen by the people, acting with impartial spirit and representing God. "Ye shall be as gods." 3. The places in which justice was upheld. "In all thy gates." The places of public resort where courts were held and business transacted. The Ottoman Porte derives its name (*Porta*) from this custom of administration. The word here means in every

city and town. Amid the homes and daily affairs of men right and authority must be obeyed. Earthly courts must be a type of heavenly; human tribunals remind us of the power and jurisdiction of Him against whom "the gates of hell shall not prevail."

**Vers. 21-22. Idolatry.** 1. Its various forms. Idolatry previously forbidden; but law repeated against particular forms and places. 2. The people's proneness to it. 3. The divine prohibition. No intermixture of worship, no tampering with danger. Entire avoidance.

## ILLUSTRATIONS ON CHAPTER. XVI.

**Vers. 1-4. Remember.** A good memory is the best monument. Others are subject to casualty or time; and we know that the pyramids themselves,

doting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders.—*Fuller*. The memory of past labours is very sweet.—*Cicero*.

Vers. 4-8. *The place.* Public worship is the nearest resemblance of heaven.—*Clarkson.*

Vers. 11-14. If men lived like men their houses would be temples—temples which we should hardly dare to inquire, and in which it would make us holy to be permitted to live (*Ruskin*).—*Joy.*

All who joy would win  
Must share it—Happiness was born a twin.  
*Byron.*

Vers. 9, 13, 16. *Feasts.* Festivals, when duly observed, attach men to the civil and religious institutions of their country: it is an evil therefore when they fall into disuse. For the same reason the loss of local observances is to be regretted: who is there that does not remember their effect upon himself in early life. (*Southey*.) Those are the rarest feasts which are graced with the most royal guests.—*W. Secker.*

Vers. 18-20. *Judge.* Sir Mt. Hale was very exact and impartial in the administration of justice. He would never receive any private addresses or recommendation from the highest persons. One of the first peers of England once called upon him

privately, to acquaint him with a suit in law to be tried before him, that he might better understand it in open court. Sir Mt. stopped him and told him that he never received information of causes, but where both parties might be heard alike. The nobleman went away, complained to the king and declared it a rudeness that could not be endured. His Majesty bade him to content himself that he was no worse used, and said "He verily believed he would have used himself no better if he had gone to solicit him in any of his own causes."—*Buck.*

Vers. 21-22. *Image.* Idolatry has its origin in the human heart. Men love sin and do not want to be reprov'd for it; therefore they form themselves a god that will not reprove them. (*J. H. Evans*.) All the princes of the earth have not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies as God hath lost souls by the means of images. Christ saith not, "Go preach unto the people by images," but "Go into all the world and preach the gospel."—*Bp. Hooper.*

"Yet man, this glorious creature, can debase  
His spirit down to worship wood and stone,  
And hold the very beasts which bear his yoke  
And tremble at his eye for sacred things."  
*London.*

## CHAPTER XVII.

**CRITICAL REMARKS.**—Israel not only had tendency to idolatry, but inclination to offer animals with faults and to transgress the laws of worship. *Blemishes* named in Lev. xxii.

Vers. 2-7. *Idolaters slain.* Done wickedness, *lit.* the wickedness, the special sin denounced. Facts were to be enquired into, the charge substantiated. *Two witnesses* were needful (Num. xxv. 30) to condemn. *Thy gates*, where judicial proceedings took place (*cf.* Neh. viii 1-3; Job xxix. 7). "The sentence executed outside the town, as it had been outside the camp in the wilderness (Lev. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 36), to indicate the exclusion of the criminal from the congregation, and from fellowship with God"—*put away, lit.* consume, set fire to, destroy by burning; hence to root out, remove, annihilate.

Vers. 8-13. *The Higher Judicial Court at the Sanctuary.* *Too hard.* Ver. 8. The transition is obvious for enactments of capital crimes to obscure and difficult cases; cases like that brought before Moses (Ex. xviii. 23-27). "In future judges of the different towns were to bring all cases which they were unable to decide, before the priests, the Levites and the judge that shall be in those days." Ver. 9. "The judge would no doubt be a layman, and thus the court would contain both an ecclesiastical and civil element." (*Speak. Com.*) Ver. 10. This superior court was not a court of appeal to adjudicate on verdicts given by another court. Its decisions were final and

authoritative; founded on law—the suitors must obey them as the voice of Jehovah. Ver. 12. *Do presumptuously.* If a person was refractory and disobedient he would be put to death as a rebel against God.

Vers. 14-20. The choice and duties of a king. The choice of a king is not like that of judges and officers (xvi.), enjoined, but simply permitted. The reason is obvious. Provision for due administration of justice is essential; that justice should be dispensed through monarchical forms is not so; and is accordingly only recognised as an arrangement, which might probably result on the settlement and consolidation of the people in Canaan. (*Speak. Com.*)

Vers. 16-20. Three rules given for the guidance of the king. He was not to keep *many horses*, and thus lead back the people to Egypt, from which God had delivered them. He must trust in God, not in warlike preparations. Ver. 17. Nor to have *many wives*, lest his heart should be turned from God. Lastly, he must not accumulate a vast treasure, by engaging in foreign commerce. Solomon transgressed this rule (2 Chron. i. 15), and was imitated by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 2). Ver. 18. Instead of minding earthly things he must meditate in the law; copy it himself or have a copy written for him; daily consult it, to keep him from pride and error; to prolong his own life and secure the crown to his posterity.

### BLEMISHED SACRIFICES.—*Verse 1.*

Sacrifices are of divine origin, and God alone can specify what kind will be acceptable to him. Animals perfect and uninjured were always to be offered (Ex. xii. 5; Lev. i. 3).

I. God requires perfect sacrifices. “No blemish.” There must be no flaw in character, obedience, and life. No hypocrisy in worship and profession. Nothing ill-favoured and unsightly. Our sacrifices must beset the sacred purpose for which they are offered, and be the symbol of the moral integrity of those who offer them. “Whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you.”

II. Men offer imperfect sacrifices. Many things are withheld which God demands, and things which are offered are lame and blind. They are blemished, defective in spirit and measure. We keep back part of our time and the best of our service. They are tainted with worldly influence, half-heartedness, selfishness, and reluctance. “Should I accept this at your hand?”

III. How then can our sacrifices be acceptable to God? Not through our merits, but “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In ancient time animals were not accepted so much on account of their perfect, physical organisation, or intrinsic excellence, as their typical value. They were selected and offered on behalf of the guilty. When offered in penitence and faith they were received. If we come in rectitude of heart, God will pardon and bless. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?”

### THE DETECTION AND PUNISHMENT OF GUILT.—*Verses 2-7.*

The duties of magistrates are again enjoined, and special forms legalised to detect and punish idolators.

I. The detection of guilt. Actions speak louder than words. If a man or woman served other gods it would be known and talked about. But crime was discovered. 1. *Not by mere report.* “It be told thee.” Reports do mischief, and must be sifted before circulated. They were not to act on hearsay, or under prejudice and excitement. 2. *Honest enquiry was made.*



"Inquired diligently." Flying rumours were judiciously examined. Diligent search might substantiate the report. If not, a salutary dread would impress the people. 3. *The offence proved by competent witnesses.* Not by the testimony of one, but of two or three witnesses was the guilty punished (verse 6). This was a safeguard against a hasty and unjust verdict. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Cor. xiii. 1).

II. *The punishment of the guilty.* "He that is worthy of death be put to death" (verse 6). 1. *The witnesses must lead* (verse 7). This would check false witness, and ensure truthfulness and sincerity. It would be a public avowal of their testimony, and a proof that the sin had met its due punishment. 2. *The punishment was inflicted openly.* "At the gates." Condemned criminals were executed outside the walls, and thus put to greater shame as a warning to others. This was a type of the rejection of Jesus, who suffered without the camp, and bore our reproach (Heb. xiii. 12.) 3. *All the people took part.* The hands of the witness first, and then the people (verse 7). All are interested in checking crime, and all must be purified when it is detected. God will have no rival. Idolatry of every degree and description is a capital crime, and death is decreed as its penalty. We must detest it, uproot it in our hearts and customs. "So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

### IDOLATRY, A GRIEVOUS SIN.

I. *It is offensive to God.* "The wickedness in the sight of the Lord." 1. *A violation of His covenant.* "In transgressing His covenant" (verse 2). Concealed or open, cultured or gross in form, it robbed God of His due. "It was spiritual adultery which breaks the marriage bond," says Henry. It rendered void the covenant, and therefore forfeited all its blessings. 2. *A defeating of His purpose.* Israel was chosen to be a holy people and to preserve purity of worship, but idolatry defeated this object.

II. *It is injurious to society.* "Abomination wrought in Israel" (verse 4). It extinguishes the light and impairs the moral sensibilities of the nation. It breaks the moral bonds and creates debasing habits in society. It is the spring of posset immorality. An act of treason and rebellion against the majesty of Heaven.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 4, 5. *Precautions in search of the truth.* Told thee privately, and in confidence; thou hast heard of it, therefore notorious, a public scandal and likely to be true; *enquired diligently*, sought to find out the truth, by careful examination of persons and circumstances: *behold it is true*, not founded on vague rumour or malice; *the thing certain*, proved by the clearest evidence; *then bring forth the man*, etc. (verse 5). The charge of idolatry was the most solemn and awful that could be brought against an Israelite, because it affected his *life*; therefore,

God required that the charge should be *substantiated* by most unequivocal facts, and most competent witnesses. Hence all the precautions mentioned must be carefully used, to arrive at so affecting, and so awful a truth.—(Ad. Clarke.)

*The Sacredness of Human Life.* 1. A man thought innocent until proved guilty. 2. A fair trial to establish the guilt. 3. The method of punishing guilt a wise procedure. (a) Interesting the people in its detection and punishment. (b) Secur-

ing moral certainty in truthful verdict.  
(c) Economy in judicial administration.

*Witnesses inflicting punishment.*

1. To deter from rash accusation. 2. To check the evil thus punished. "A rule which would naturally lead to the supposition that no man would come forward as a witness without the fullest certainty or the greatest depravity." (*Keil*). He assigned this part to the witnesses, chiefly because there are so

many whose tongue is so slippery, not to say good for nothing, that they would boldly strangle a man with their words, when they would not dare to touch him with one of their fingers. It was the best remedy, therefore, that could be tried for restraining such levity, to refuse to admit the testimony of any man who was not ready to execute judgment with his own hand. —(*Calvin*.)

DECISION OF CONTROVERSIES.—*Verses 8-13.*

In all evil and criminal cases where doubts and difficulties were involved, local magistrates were to submit them to the supreme council for final decision. From this decision there must be no swerving right or left.

**I. Human interests often perplex** "A matter too hard for thee in judgment." Cases were often complicated and obscure, too hard for inferior judges to decide. 1. *They spring up in small circles*, "within thy gates" (ver. 8). In towns and villages difficult questions have to be considered—poor laws, sanitary measures, and bitter cries in many forms. Often the smaller the circle the more perplexing the problem. 2. *They relate to civil matters*. Cases of murder or death, accidentally or wilfully, "between blood and blood" contending parties in law suits, "between plea and plea." Actions of assault or bodily injury, "between stroke and stroke." Society is not perfect. Men are selfish, cruel and disobedient. The wisest rules are often unable to solve the controversy within the gates. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight."

**II. The court of appeal to settle these interests.** Courts of judgment were in every city (xvi. 18), empowered to determine cases of the crown and of the people. 1. *Composed of appointed officers*. "Thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge. Representatives of God in every department of life must be expounders of law and examples of justice. 2. *Assembled in one place*. "Get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (ver. 8). The sittings were held near the sanctuary, that in great emergencies the high priest might consult the Urim (Num. xxvii. 21). The house of God is the place of righteousness and the seat of learning. We must come not only to meditate and praise, but to "enquire" from His servants and word. "Ask now the priests concerning the law."

**III. The importance of the decision given by this court.** This was the highest judicial authority and its decisions were most important. 1. *They were legally right*. "They shall show thee the sentence of judgment" (ver. 9). In harmony with the will of God and the interests of the suitors. Not the result of worldly wisdom but of divine teaching. 2. *They were binding in authority*. No appeal from this judgment. It was the law of God, not the enactment of men. a. *Obedience was enforced*. "Thou shalt do." We must receive the truth, not as the word of man, but the word of God. b. *Disobedience was punished*. The man that would not hearken but acted presumptuously must die. Resistance was rebellion, which was severely rebuked, condemned and punished. It was "striving with the priest" (Hos. iv. 4) and contending with

God. "What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" 3. *They were benevolent in their aim.* "That the people might hear and fear and do no more presumptuously" (ver. 13). To check evil, keep humble, and promote order and righteousness. "For the punishment of evil doers and the praise of them that do well."

### SOCIETY'S WELFARE PROMOTED.

Mankind are associated together for something more than to eat, sleep, and secure protection. They co-exist for mutual intercourse, mutual help and the advancement of present and eternal good. This is accomplished—

I. By legal tribunals. Since society is not human in its origin, conventional in its principals, and accidental in its destination, its institutions must harmonise with its character and aim. Government is needful to its existence and welfare. Courts of justice are tribunals to defend right, truth, and liberty. God who lays upon mankind the necessity of appointing rulers, has laid upon rulers the necessity of rewarding good and punishing evil. Resistance tends to weaken government and create disorder. "Let every good soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained (ordered) of God."

II. By the co-operation of all its functions. We have different classes, different ranks and various interests among men. But in political, ecclesiastical and civil matters, the good of the whole should be consulted. Priests and ministers of religion may enlighten the public conscience and expound the law. Judges and magistrates may administer that law "for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well." There should be no invasion of rights and no alienation of ranks; no miscarriage of justice and no schism in the body." There are many departments with one interest and end; "diversities of operation with the same spirit."

Heaven forming each on other to depend

A master, or a servant, or a friend,

Bids each on other for assistance call,

Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.

III. By upholding the authority of God's Word. "The law" must be honoured and upheld. This is the only guarantee of order, prosperity and morality. It should be the ruling principle of kings, parliaments, and people. It should regulate the counsels of statesmen and the maxims of lawyers; reign in the country and the colonies, in the cottage and the court. This is the sweet ground on which a nation's prosperity can rest and rise to the highest pitch. Institutions and enterprises, thrones and empires that disregard the word of God will fall, and great will be their fall. When the law of God is exalted "there will be security of thy times, riches of salvation, of wisdom and knowledge. Fear of Jehovah is then the treasure of Judah" (Isa. xxxiii. 6).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 8-13. There is a misconception of this passage. The argument built upon it by the most able Romish controversialists is, that here plainly the Bible is not enough; that you are

to go to a judge, the priest to get his opinion and his decision, and if you will not accept it, that then you are to be anathematized and expelled. But just mark a few distinctions overlooked



in such a statement. *First*, it is not to hear a controversy about doctrine, but a controversy about blood, and plea, and stroke,—civil matters. *Secondly*, when there is a controversy, it is not the high priest that is to decide it; but it is the priest or the Levite—a layman—or the judge—a layman also. Therefore if they will quote this passage as a precedent for Papal infallibility, deciding doctrinal discussions and expelling them that will not submit to it, they ought to quote fully; and if they quote fully, they will see it is not controversy about doctrine, but about civil matters; and next, that the controversy is to be appealed not to an ecclesiastic

only, but to a layman as well.—(*Dr. Cumming.*)

Vers. 9, 10.—Duties of priests to expound the law, of judges to administer it, and of the people to ascertain it. "The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet."

Vers. 12, 13. *Presumptuous sins.* 1. Resistance to priests when dissatisfied with interpretation of law. 2. Resistance to judges when discontented with sentence or decisions given. Such refractory conduct worthy of death. "Presumptuous are they and self-willed." "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin."

#### THE CHOICE AND DUTY OF A KING.—Verses 14–20.

If Israel should wish for a king when they possessed the land, God gave permission to choose one under His direction. "The appointment of a king is not *commanded*, like the institution of judges (chap. xvi. 18), because Israel could exist under the government of Jehovah without an earthly king; it is simply *permitted*, in case the need should arise for a regal government." (*Keil.*)

I. The choice of a king. Moses foresaw the nation's wish to have a king, and is taught to legislate for his choice and conduct (*cf.* 1 Sam. viii. 10–12). 1. *According to Divine arrangement.* "Set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose." The people might select, but subject somehow to Divine approval. Kings are God's vice-regents, and He nominates when nations elect them. God's will should direct and determine our choice. The people are reproved for acting in forgetfulness. "They have set up kings, but not by me" (Hos. viii. 4). 2. *Not from a strange nation.* "Not a stranger over thee which is not thy brother." Kings must own their kinship to the people and act as brothers, not as Eastern despots nor royal castes. A gentile head for a Jewish nation would be strange, might defeat the end in view in separating that nation from others, and introduce strange customs and foreign alliances.

II. The duties of the king. These are specified. 1. *Negatively.* (a) He is not to depend upon horses. "Not multiply horses" (verse 16). His trust must not be in "horses and chariots" and warlike preparations, but in the living God. Egypt furnished Canaan with horses (1 Kings x. 28, 29), and they might be endangered by alliance, and tainted by idolatry. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses" etc. (Is. xxxi. 1). (b) Not to be seduced by many wives. "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself." No harem must be kept to gratify the love of pleasure. His heart must not be turned away from business and works of piety. "When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings xi. 1–4). (c) Not to accumulate riches. "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." Desire for wealth might lead to oppression and injustice. Riches produce pride, and we are not "to trust in uncertain riches." 2. *Positively.* (a) He must copy the law, or some qualified scribe must copy it for him. This would inure himself to labour and study, enlighten and impress his mind. The Word of God must not only be written on parchment, but imprinted on

the mind and heart. (b) He must read it when copied. "He shall read therein." It is not enough to have the Bible in the cabinet, or in the drawer; we must read it. Read it daily, read it all through life as our guide and companion. Alexander valued Homer most highly and Scipio Africanus would scarcely allow Xenophon's Cyclopædia to be put out of sight. The king of Israel was to study God's word, and meditate therein day and night.

### EARTHLY KINGS UNDER THE POWER OF THE HEAVENLY KING.

**I. In the method of their election.** None chosen without God's permission, or if chosen, elected without His providence. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. iv. 32; v. 21).

**II. In the laws by which they govern.** Good laws are made by good men, and good men are the gift of God. Bad laws are often overruled for the good of men. "Of law," says Hooker, "these can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God—her voice the harmony of the world."

**III. In the duration of their reign—**God can lengthen or shorten their days. He puts down one and sets up another. "He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. ii. 21).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 14. Anticipated provisions.** Regal government not enjoined, almost discountenanced and forbidden, but future provision made and rules of conduct given. So in Christian history and Christian life.

**Ver. 16. Horses.** As horses appear to have been generally furnished by Egypt, God prohibits these. 1. Lest these should be such commerce with Egypt as might lead to idolatry. 2. Lest the people might depend upon a well appointed cavalry as a means of security and so cease trusting in the strength and protection of God. And 3. That they might not be tempted to extend their dominion by means of cavalry and so get scattered among the surrounding idolatrous nations, and thus cease in process of time to be that distinct and separate people which God intended they should be; and without which the prophecies relative to the Messiah, could not be known to have the due and full accomplishment.—*A. Clarke.*

**Ver. 18. Write a copy.** 1. A standard of reference. Probably an

autograph kept in the tabernacle by the priests. 2. A preventative from error. Possibly every copy was revised by priests and compared to the original. 3. A provision for the future. Former copies would bear out, but new ones were to be made. Thus the Word of God has been handed down from age to age.

**Vers. 18, 19.** Observe on this passage—1. That it was the surest way to bring the Israelitish king to an acquaintance with the divine law, to oblige him to write out a fair copy of it with his own hand. 2. He has to read this law diligently and constantly; neither the greatness of his place nor the height and multitude of his business must excuse or hinder him. 3. It is not enough to have Bibles, but we must use them; yea, use them daily. Our souls must have constant meals of that manna, which, if well digested, will afford them true nourishment and strength.—*J. Wilson.* The king, even the king, was not to employ an amanuensis, but was himself to write out a copy of the law. Evidently the reason was, what you read rapidly

you forget rapidly, but if you sit down and write, and that carefully and in the best handwriting that you can, texts from the Bible, you will recollect them much more easily. And no doubt the object of making the king write it out for himself was that it might be impressed upon his mind and heart the more.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Vers. 19, 20. Proper reading of Scripture will beget—1. A right state of mind. "That his heart be not lifted up." Deep humility becomes all students. 2. Reverence for Divine authority. The fear of God and regard for His statutes. 3. Conscientious obedience to Divine law—"To do them," or daily reading of the law. (1) To learn to fear God. (2) To be kept from pride. (3) To prevent apostasy, and (4) to secure the possession of the throne. Elevation begets pride and pride independence. Charles the Great set the crown upon the Bible. The Bible is the best support of the crown and kingdom.

*With him.* As his *vade mecum*, his manual, his running library, the man of his counsel. Luther said he would not live in Paradise without the Bible,

as with it he could easily live in hell itself.—*Trapp.*

*That his heart be not lifted up.* Observe—1. It is here intimated that the Scriptures diligently read are a powerful means to keep a person humble, because they show that, though a king, he is subject to a higher monarch, to whom he must give an account of all his administrations, and receive from him his sentence agreeably to their quality, which is sufficient to abate the haughtiest person in the world. 2. That the greatest monarch may receive more benefit by the Scriptures than by all the wealth and power of his monarchy. An attentive, prayerful, believing perusal of the Bible will be of advantage. (1) To His person. "He shall prolong his days in his kingdom. We find in the history of the kings of Judah, that generally the best reigns were the longest, except when God shortened them for the punishment of the people, as Josiah's. (2) To his family; his children shall also prosper. Entail religion upon posterity and God will entail a blessing upon it."—*J. Wilson.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. *Blemish.* Remember that God will not be mocked; that it is the heart of the worshipper which he regards. We are never safe till we love Him with our whole heart whom we pretend to worship.—*Bp. Henshawe.*

Vers. 2-7. There is but one true God, who made heaven and earth, and sea and winds; but the folly and madness of mankind brought in *images* as representatives of God (Rom. i. 22, 23). "All the princes of the earth hath not had so many subjects betrayed and made traitors by their enemies as God hath lost souls by the means of idolatry and images.—*Bp. Hooker.*

*Enquire diligently,* ver. 4.

"Believe not each accusing tongue,  
As most weak persons do;  
But still believe that story wrong  
Which ought not to be true."—

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*Sheridan.*

Vers. 8-13. *Too hard.* The greatest difficulties lie where we are not looking for them.—(*Goethe.*) *Controversy,* ver. 8. Many controversies grow up about religion, as suckers from the root and limbs of a fruit tree, which spend the vital sap that should make it fruitful.—(*Flavel.*) *Sentence of judgment,* ver. 9. The main strength and force of a law consists in the penalty annexed to it.—*Blackstone.*

"Sovereign law, that states collected will  
O'er thrones and globes elate,  
Sits empress, crowning good, repressing ill.  
*Sir W. Jones.*

Vers. 14, 15. *King over thee.* Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. (*Burke.*) *Horses.* For stateliness and majesty what is comparable to a horse? —*Sir T. More.*



Vers. 18-20. *A book.* Bishop Hooker, in a dedication to king Edward VI., remarked, "God in heaven, and the king on earth, hath not a greater friend than the Bible." "The Bible is the foundation of all good government, as it instructs rulers and subjects in their respective duties. A French lady once said to Lord Chesterfield that she thought the Parliament of England consisted of five or six hundred of the best informed and most sensible

men in the kingdom. 'True, madam, they are generally supposed to be so.' 'What then, my lord, can be the reason that they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?' 'I suppose, madam,' replied his lordship, 'it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its stead; when they can, I do not doubt but in their wisdom they will readily adopt it.'"—*Whitecross.*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—After speaking of the rulers of the people, Moses now mentions the teachers priests, Levites, and prophets; and what their privileges and position must be in their settlement in Canaan.

Vers. 3-5. *Rights of priests.* The tribe of Levi had no inheritance like other tribes (Num. 18-20); wholly consecrated to the priestly office, they were supported by tithes, first-fruits, and portions of sacrifices, which God had expressly reserved to Himself, yet when offered bestowed upon His servants. *Priest's due*, the shoulder, two cheeks, and the maw, *i.e.*, the front leg. The two jaw bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants in which digestion is completed, and which was considered a great dainty (ver. 3). *First-fruits*, the law repeated from Num. xviii. 12, 13, for the purpose of adding "the first of the fleece of thy sheep" (ver. 4). *Him and his sons.* Reference to Aaron and his sons, in whom the priesthood was established (ver. 5).

Vers. 6-8. *The Levites, i.e.*, the non-priestly Levites contrasted with the priests must be remembered. "These verses presuppose that part of the Levites only will be in residence and officiating at the sanctuary, the others dwelling in their homes in the Levitical cities (*cf.* Num. xxxv). But if any Levite, out of love for the service, chose to resort to it when he might reside in his own home, he was to have his share in the maintenance which was provided for those ministering in the order of their cause."—(*Speak. Com.*) *Sojourned*, though not homeless. He was regarded as a sojourner only, for he had no inheritance in the land. *Minister assistant* to the priest (Num. iii. 6). *Patrimony, lit.* his price upon (the house) of (his) fathers. *Margin*, his sales by the fathers. The Levites had no part in the land, but they might individually have property, buy and sell houses and fields. Abiathar (1 Kings ii. 26; Jeremiah xxxii. 7). A Levite who desired to settle at the sanctuary, must have his share of the perquisites, notwithstanding private resources. *Have like portions, lit.*, "part like part shall they eat." The new comer and those already in attendance must share and share alike.

Vers. 9-14. Passing on to speak of the prophets, the legislator begins by enumerating and prohibiting the various superstitions by which heathen nations of Canaan had sought to explore the future and to test the will of the Deity.—(*Sp. Com.*) *Through fire, i.e.*, to Molech, (*cf.* Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 2-5), a rite of doubtful character, but connected with magical arts, and probably with unlawful lusts (2 Kings xvii. 17; 2 Chr. xxxiii. 6; Ezek. xlii. 37). *Divination* (*cf.* Ezek. xxi. 21) for different methods of it, and (Num. xxiii. 23) *observance of times*, mode of dividing days into lucky and unlucky, or of drawing omens from clouds (Lev. xix. 26). *Enchanter*, serpent charmer. *Witch*, sorcerer (Ex. vii. 11). *Charmer* (ver. 11), one who fascinates noxious animals, like Eastern serpent-charmers. The word is derived from a root to bind, referring to the custom of binding or banning by magical knots. *Wizard*, originally "the wise one," "the knowing one," from a verb to know. *Necromancer*, one who interrogates the dead (2 Chr. xxxiii. 6). Thus all known words are grouped together, which belong to the practices described—*perfect*, upright, sincere or blameless (Latin *integer*) in relation to God. *For thee* emphatic, not so thou, God never allowed (Heb. *given*), granted thee to do such things.

Vers. 15-22. No need for Israel to turn to soothsayers; God would raise up from amongst them a prophet time after time, a series of prophets. *Like me*, not in every sense, but as intercessor for the people and revealer of God's will. *Assembly* (ver. xvi. 16 *cf.* cp. 9, 10, and

Ex. xx. 19). To this prophet who should speak words received directly from God, reverence and obedience must be rendered. *Require it* (ver. 19), *i.e.*, visit disobedience with punishment (*cf.* Ps. x. 13; Acts iii. 23). The prophet who presumed to speak in God's name, or utter words not given him, must be regarded as a blasphemer and put to death (ver. 20). If his prophecy failed, or if his words did not come to pass, he was discovered to be an imposter. Whatever signs and wonders were performed, fulfilment of prediction was the true test of prophecy (*cf.* cp. 12, 2 *sq.*).

### THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PRIESTS.—*Verses 1-5.*

From the limitations of monarchy, Moses turns to the duties of the priests and specifies their inheritance and dues.

I. The dignity of priests. They were a special tribe called to minister in the name of the Lord (ver. 5). 1. *Chosen of God.* "Thy God hath chosen him." This is an honour which no man taketh upon himself (Heb. v. 5), not hereditarily, nor conferred by men, and which should not be despised. "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you . . . to bring you nearer to Himself" (Num. xvi. 9). 2. *Consecrated to holy service.* "To minister in the name of the Lord." He was not engaged in secular callings, nor employed in the service of an earthly monarch, but in the service, by the authority and for the praise of God. A sense of this dignity should be carefully formed, and constantly realised. Dignity of character should correspond with dignity of station. Ministers should "magnify" (glorify) their "office" (Rom. xi. 13) by a due appreciation of its nature, an earnest endeavour to live up to its demands, and a fearless discharge of its duties.

II. The due of priests. Deprived of land and specially set apart for spiritual functions, they had special reverences. 1. *They required the sympathy of the people.* The order preceded from the midst of the people (Ex. xxviii 1), was appointed for the benefit of the people and depended upon the people. They were not a sacred caste, standing in proud pre-eminence above the rest of the nation. A principle of equality was indicated in priesthood and monarchy. "Taken from among men." 2. *They required the support of the people.* To reward their labour, performed instead of the first-born of the people, and to compensate their loss of material wealth, it was ordained that they should receive tithes of produce and parts of animal sacrifices. The Levite, as well as the widow and orphan, was commended to the special kindness of the people (Deut. xiv. 27-29; xii. 19). "He commanded the people to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxxi. 4).

III. The inheritance of priests. They had cities and residence that they might exercise a refined influence upon the people, and disseminate a knowledge of the law, but no territorial possessions. "The Lord is their inheritance" (verse 2). Theirs by adopting love, personal preference, and public avowal. An inheritance blessed, satisfactory, secure, and permanent. "I am their inheritance and ye shall give them no possession in Israel" (Ezek. xlv. 28).

### THE MINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PRIESTS.—*Verses 1-8.*

The words may be applied to the Christian ministry, though not a priesthood in the Old Testament sense. The sacred office is filled with men divinely called and qualified, entrusted with the most responsible and enriching blessing, and rendering the greatest service to their fellow men.

**I.** The calling of a priest is one of the highest into which a man can enter. It eclipses earthly callings as the sun outshines the stars. 1. *An office divinely instituted.* Not left to the wisdom and device of men. "The ministry is a matter of free grace and favour," says Quesnel, "who then will dare to enter into it without a Divine call? There is nothing in which a king would willingly be more absolute than in the choice of his ministers, and shall we dare to contest, and take away this right from the King of Kings." "Ordained of God as was Aaron." 2. *An office spiritual in its nature.* Levites were forbidden to become farmers and enter into commercial pursuits. They were devoted to the service of God and the ministration of His house. The work is not an ordinary profession, conducted on the principles of commercial transactions. Ministers "must give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." 3. *An office perpetual in its duration.* "Him and his sons for ever." Aaron died but successors entered the office. Human life is uncertain; we must not trust to man whose breath is in his nostrils. Ministers die, but the ministry remains a perpetual monument, a gift of God to all generations.

**II.** Many priests in discharging the duties of their calling are exemplary in their zeal. Sometimes a Levite would leave his own home, and from intense love devote himself to the altar of the sanctuary. "Come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose." This is the true spirit of service, the spirit of the Master and of His apostles. No coldness and formality here. We often lack zeal and spiritual fervour; are too carnal, selfish, and slothful. Love is wanting. "O that I was all heart, and soul, and spirit," said Rowland Hill, "to tell the glorious gospel of Christ to perishing multitudes." We must sacrifice worldly pleasure, and personal convenience, and devote ourselves with energy to our work. "I longed to be as a flame of fire continually glowing in the Divine service," cried Brainerd. "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up (devoured like a flame)" (Jno. ii. 17; Ps. lxxix. 9).

**III.** It is the duty of the people to support the priests in their calling. "The priests" had their "due from the people." 1. *This is reasonable.* "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, it is a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things!" If a man gives his time and talents for the benefit of the people, surely they are bound to secure his temporal comforts. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." 2. *This is scriptural.* The principle laid down by our Lord and applied by apostles in support of the ministry is confirmed by scripture. "Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so the Lord hath ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." This arrangement helps to secure an efficient ministry, to promote mutual good, and to bring out energies for the spread of the gospel.

#### DESIRE FOR MINISTERIAL SERVICE.—Verse 6.

It appears that the Levites served in rotation from the earliest times; but from their great numbers, it was only at distant intervals they could be called into actual service. Should any Levite, however, under the influence of eminent piety, resolve to devote himself wholly and continually to the sacred duties of the Sanctuary, he was allowed to realise his ardent wishes; and as he was admitted to the share of the work, so also to a share of the remuneration (Jamieson). This desire for the work is a prominent feature in the character and qualifications of the Christian minister.



**I. It is a constraining desire.** More than a general desire to be useful—a special kindling within, like “the burning fire shut up” in the prophet’s bosom overcoming reluctance for God’s service (Jer. xx. 9). This constraint rises above all difficulties, and takes pleasure in sacrifices for the work’s sake. “This is a true saying (note the emphasis), if a man *desire* (vehemently, intensely) the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. iii. 1).

**II. It is a considerate desire.** The result of matured thought. The cost is counted, most watchful caution exercised, and the providence of God ascertained. Matthew Henry warns against intrusion into the sacred office. “We must not be *forward* to put forth ourselves in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Pride often appears under the pretence of a desire to be useful. If the motive be correct it is good, but *humility will wait for a call*.” “He that believeth shall not make haste.”

**III. It is a disinterested desire.** A choice not influenced by love of literature, respect and professional dignity. “With all brave and and rightly-trained men, their work is first, their fee second,” says Ruskin. It is an office in which we “seek not great things for ourselves.” God always implants a love in the heart for the service to which He calls, and better not enter than seek to get a name or maintain a party. “If I do this thing willingly (spontaneously without remuneration) I have a reward (verse 18), but if against my will (not spontaneously), a dispensation (a stewardship) is committed to me, “and so have no special claim to reward for that which necessity is laid upon me to do.” (1 Cor. ix. 17.)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 2. *The Lord their inheritance.*** True of the believer as well as the Levite and priest. An inheritance.

**1. *Divinely bestowed.*** Not gained like earthly possessions by favouritism, wealth, and hereditary succession. **2. *Ever sufficient.*** Men of the world seek pleasure here and there, labour for possessions and are doomed to disappointment. Charles V., Emperor of Germany, cried out to all his honours and trophies “Get you hence, no more of you.” **3. *Indissolubly sure.*** It never diminishes, changes hands nor leads to poverty. “An everlasting portion.”

***Stand to minister.*** 1. Priestly service, active, energetic ministry nor idleness, apathy nor negligent habits.

“*Exercise thyself.*” **2. Priestly spirit.** Not selfish, but self-sacrificing and Christlike, which prompts to self-denial and readiness of mind. “Here Lord am I, send me.” **3. Priestly reward.** In God the object of affection and centre of bliss. “I am their inheritance,” etc. (Ezek. xlv. 28).

**Vers. 6-8. *Voluntary service.*** **1.** Devoted to the noblest purpose. **2.** Rendered in the holiest place. **3.** Springing from the warmest spirit. We must offer ourselves. Self-consecration, the first act of priestly service. “Our character is our will,” says Archbishop Manning, “for what we *will we are.*”

#### THE VOCATION AND DUTY OF GOD’S PEOPLE.—*Verses 9-13.*

Israel had constantly to be warned against infection from the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. The nature of such customs is described, and they are reminded of their calling and relation to God.

**I. God calls His people to be like Him.** “Be perfect with the Lord thy God” (verse 13). Israel were to be upright in conduct, unpolluted in worship,

and devoted entirely to Him. Likeness to God must be the aim of life. A Christian must progress in knowledge and love of God every day; for the less we think of God, the greater the danger of conforming to the world. "Let us go on unto perfection." This is the high calling and destiny of the believer. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

II. In responding to this call, they must avoid worldly customs. Called out of the world, though living in it, they must avoid its "abominations," charmers and "observers of times." It has its witches, and "women of familiar spirits." Notions of lucky and unlucky days are not confined to heathen countries. In this country, men observe the stars, charm diseases, and prognosticate success of wars, the happiness or misfortune of marriages, and the length of human life. This dethrones God from the heart and supersedes the promises and threatenings of His word. It rejects the doctrine of Divine Providence and is treason to the Ruler of the Universe. "Should not a people seek unto their God? for (on behalf of) the living (should they consult) to the dead?" (Is. viii. 19).

III. In seeking to avoid worldly customs God alone can help. God alone had preserved Israel in the past. "Thy God hath not suffered thee so to do" (ver. 14). In the future, instead of having recourse to heathen superstitions, He would provide them with "a prophet," with divine teaching time after time. In Christ and the scripture we have help. If weak and sinful, God's grace can renew and strengthen. If dark and uncertain, the word is a light and guide. Christ completes what Moses begins. He is still performing the prophetic office, calling ministers by His Spirit, enlightening men to understand the scriptures and making the gospel come to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.

### HEATHEN ABOMINATIONS AVOIDED.

One reason to shun the practices of idolatry springs from the nature of the evils themselves. 1. *They are cruel.* Children "pass through the fire." How inhuman that religion which requires children to be burned or thrown into rivers, and parents in age and infirmity to be given to wild beasts! "Cruelty is one of the highest scandals to piety," says Secker. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty (homesteads of violence)."—*Kay*. (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) 2. *They are enticing.* Divination, enchanter and witch have their spells. Idolatry, "a shameful creed of craft and cruelty," delights in what fills the sensuous imagination. Ritualistic practices attract the eyes, fascinate the mind, and minister to self-conceit. "Who hath bewitched (fascinated) you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. iii. 1). 3. *They are defiling* "Abominations." Paintings and sculptures, laws and legends, reveal the awful corruptions of the heathen world. All sin defiles, and men through sin "are together become unprofitable (corrupt, useless)" (Rom. iii. 12). Their odour is not praise and prayer, but the poison of asps and secreted malice. "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." 4. *They are destructive.* "Because of these abominations the Lord doth drive them out." Sin drives away from God here and from heaven hereafter. The fruit of idolatry and superstitions is death. Death spiritual and death eternal. "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you, for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 13, 14. 1. *Preserving grace.* God did not suffer Israel to do these things. Other nations He "gave up to their own hearts' lusts, and suffered to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14-16). 2. *High vocation.* "Be perfect." Every man has an ideal, some ruling thought, some object of life. Religion sets forth the ends of life and supplies motives and power for striving for them. God is the desire of our nature, fills the highest capacities of the mind, and should be the aim of our life. 3. *Constant effort to reach it.* "Thou shalt not learn to do these." Life is a school in which we must learn to know God and do good.

Ver. 13. *Christian perfection.* A solemn injunction. 1. Unfold its import. We must be perfect with the

Lord our God. 1. In love to His name. 2. In affiance to His care. 3. In zeal for His glory. II. Enforce its authority. Without real integrity before God, we can have—1. No comfort in our souls. 2. No stability in our ways. 3. No acceptance with God. Address—(1) Those who are unable to ascertain with confidence their real state. (2) Those who have an inward evidence that their hearts are right with God.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

*Perfect, i.e., whole, entire.* 1. In the elements of your character. Have nothing defective, weak and lacking. 2. In the method of your worship. No admixture of heathenism and error. 3. In the duties of your life. Be blameless, innocent, and upright. Scatter thy life through every part, and sanctify the whole.

## THE PROPHET LIKE TO MOSES.

Here Moses is not speaking of a collective body of prophets, to which Christ is at the end incidentally annexed, as Calvin and other expositors understand the passage; but the whole office and station of the prophets is represented to him as personified in Christ, as the person in whom his conception of that office would be perfectly realised. Thus there is a concurrent reference to the other prophets, not in their individual capacities, but only in relation to the Spirit, who, though in a manner not yet completed, was powerfully efficient in them and conjoined them along with their Head in one united body. They were viewed in Christ, as they were but His instruments; His spirit constituted the essence of their office. (*Hengstenberg*). Look at the principal circumstances in the description, *the likeness to Moses*.

I. *Like to Moses as a Prophet.* Man has ever sought instruction and desired light. Heathen oracles were dumb and philosophy impotent to satisfy this moral craving. Plato said "we must wait till someone shall teach us how we ought to conduct ourselves towards the gods"—Moses was a prophet of the highest rank who revealed and interpreted the will of God to men. Not merely a religious man, but one supernaturally inspired. But Christ was "the teacher sent from God." He came from the bosom of the Father and declared (expounded) him in all his relationships to man (John i. 18). He is the manifestation of God's character, the revelation of His purpose. The manifold partial disclosures of former messengers, have given place to one complete and final revelation in Christ. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

II. *Like to Moses as a Lawgiver.* Man requires law, loves order, and isappy only in loyal obedience. No Jewish prophet was legislator, no ruler had



right to govern supremely. David was king, inspired teacher and sweet psalmist of Israel, but his work was merely executive. Jesus only was like Moses the founder of a new constitution and a new period. He is the Head of the Church and the Sovereign of men. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ has the natural right "as a son over his own house."

III. Like to Moses as an Intercessor (verse 16). When Israel sinned, Moses interceded with God, obtained forgiveness, and delivered from temporal punishments. Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises (Heb. viii. 6). When cursed by the law, condemned by conscience and afraid of intercourse with God, then even we find access and receive help through "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."

IV. Like to Moses as leader of his people. Moses was the general and leader of the nation. As chieftain of the community he administered their affairs, and led them in the wilderness. But he could bring them only to the borders of Canaan, and did not enter it himself. Christ guides through life into heaven, and will for ever satisfy His people with fruits of faith and holiness. We know not the way and could never discover it, but He leads by example and precept. There are enemies powerful and combined, but he commands, emboldens, and gives victory. "A leader, and commander to the people."

#### FALSE PROPHETS.—Verses 20–22.

1. *The presumption they display.* "Presume to speak," with a commission from false gods as prophets of Baal; or a pretended commission from the true God. Just as there were false Christs, so were there false prophets, who impersonated for popularity and gain. 2. *The test by which they are known.* "If thou say how?" It is often difficult to distinguish the true from the false, but facts and fulfilment are the test. Whatever teaching or prediction does not accord with history, scripture and God's will, we may be sure, is not from God. Samuel's mission was proved because God "let none of His words fall to the ground" (1 Sam. iii. 19, 20). 3. *The punishment which they endure.* "That prophet shall die." They seek to deceive, to draw away the people. They have committed high treason against the crown and authority of Jehovah, and had to be condemned by the Sanhedrim which sat at Jerusalem. Hence the people cautioned not to fear a false, but to obey a true prophet. The caution is needful in our day. "Beware of false prophets."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 15–19. 1. *Man's craving for light.* On all the great problems of life. God, the future and how to be just with God. 2. *Worldly wisdom unable to reveal light.* Man has "sought out" many inventions (entangled himself with an infinity of questions, *Douay Vers*) but never succeeded (Ecc. 7. 29). 3. God in mercy has given light. Raised up prophets, sent His Son and given His Spirit and Word. "Walk in the light," etc.

Ver. 18. *Christ like Moses.* 1. In coming from the people. "From among their brethren." 2. In the intercourse he had with God. With Moses God spoke "mouth to mouth." 3. In the attention which they demand. We must "hear." Some do not even hear, but ridicule and oppose. *Hearken* with attention and desire to learn. "In all" that I speak; not some things, as the love and mercy of God, but all things concerning justice, repentance,

and faith. There must be no choice, no separation of one doctrine from another. Disobedience results in death (Acts iii. 22, 23). "Every soul" without partiality, "shall be cut off." This excision, not correction, not annihilation, but death eternal. "From among the people." Intermixed now in families and congregations, then separated for ever.

This remarkable promise has two great objects of reference. First, the assurance that God would from time to time, after Moses, send such prophets as he was; that is persons who should make known to the Israelites the will of God, stimulate them to obey His precepts, and when it was requisite

foretell future events. These promises God faithfully fulfilled in Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and their successors down to the coming of the Messiah, who was known by the fulfilment of prophecy to be the promised Redeemer. The *second point* contained is the obedience to Christ with willing hearts. In His capacity as lawgiver, deliverer, and guide, His people hearken unto Him. (*Seiler.*) *Like unto me.* Both in the participation of nature and of office. A true man, and a true Mediator. *Similes* they are, but not *pares*; Christ being "worthy of more glory than Moses," and why, see *Heb.* iii. 3; vii. 22; 9. 15.—*Trapp.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVIII

**Vers. 1-5. *Priests.*** The priesthood hath, in all nations and all religions, been held highly venerable.—*Bp. Atterbury.* The vesture of that older priesthood is with us an adornment of the heart; and the glory of them that are chief in priesthood is to us no longer commended by the beauty of vestments, but by a splendour that is of the soul.—*St. Gregory.*

**Ver. 6. *Desire of mind.*** The virtues of the will are above the successions of time.—*Abp. Manning.* Most merciful Father! grant me to covet with an ardent mind those things which may please thee; to search them wisely, to know them truly, and to fulfil them perfectly; to the praise, laud, and glory of thy name. Order my living so that I may do that which thou requirest of me, and me give grace that I may know it, and have will and power to do it.—*Edward VI.*

**Vers. 9-12. *Witch.*** A border between earth and hell; her qualities are rather those of the former than of the latter.—*G. Gilfillan.* Those who go to astrology, or wise men as they call them, to know their fortunes and enquire of the events of their life, they

forsake God, and betake themselves to lying vanities.—*Abp. Tillotson.*

Submit thy fate to Heaven's indulgent care,  
Though all seems lost, 'tis impious to despair;  
The tracks of Providence, like rivers wind,  
And though immersed in earth from human  
eyes,  
Again break forth, and more conspicuous rise.  
*Young.*

**Ver. 13. *Perfect.*** Moral perfectibility is our destiny.—*G. Forster.* The Christian ought to know more of God every day; otherwise he may think of Him less, till he totally forgets Him; and then he is in danger of falling into that state, out of which men cannot be renewed by repentance.—*Jones of Nayland.*

**Vers. 15-19. *Prophet.*** The mission of the prophets was the religious education of the Jewish people. They were raised up according to the exigencies of the times to preserve them from error, and to prepare their minds for the future development of the kingdom of God. Their *object* was twofold—to maintain the Church in allegiance to prescribe rites, institutions and ordinances, and yet to prepare the people for a further

manifestation of the blessing of the new covenant.

Ver. 19. *Not hearken.* Man is deaf and blind in the things of God. "Having ears he hears not, having eyes he sees not." To his need and to his remedy he is alike insensible. His ear is open to sound advice, to moral

doctrine, to the dictates of external decency. But as to the gospel, he is a perfect statue without life.—*Bridge.* "Is the sermon done?" it was asked of one who returned from church sooner than usual. "No, not yet;" was the answer. "It is preached, but it still remains to be done."—*G. S. Bowes.*

## CHAPTER XIX.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—This and the next two chapters contain enactments designed to protect human life, and to impress its sanctity on Israel.—*Speak. Com.*

With vers. 1-10 *cf.* Exodus xxi. 13, and Numbers xxxv. 9-34. The laws concerning cities of refuge are not mere repetitions, but an admonition to carry out former laws with reference to future extension of boundaries in the land of Canaan. Cities of refuge had already been set apart on the east of Jordan. Directions are given concerning land on the west. Three Cities more were separated *cf.* Jos. xi.

Ver. 3. *Prepare.* The Senate made good roads two or three cubits wide—not mere tracks for animals—bridged over rivers and removed barriers. This done generally in the month Adar. Every facility was given to the fugitive (Is. xl. 3). Ignorantly, without premeditation—accidentally, as verse 5. *Avenger.* Whose duty it was to avenge the rights and redeem the property of kinsmen. Not with sudden excitement or burning desire to revenge.

Vers. 8-9. In case they should possess the whole land promised by God to the fathers for faithful obedience; then they were to add three more cities and have nine altogether. This command was not carried out because extension of country was never fully or permanently realised.

Vers. 10-13. Innocent blood would be shed if the unintentional manslayer was not protected Israel would be guilty. Blood upon thee, if this duty was neglected. But the cities were not to be asylums for criminals. If a real murderer should flee for refuge, the (*elders*) magistrates of his own town were to fetch him back and deliver him to the avenger to be put to death.

Ver. 14. *Landmarks.* Not only is human life sacred, but the means of sustaining it must be held sacred—hence this prohibition. Gardens were enclosed, but fields were left open, or marked off, by a small trench, a little cairn or single stones easily removed.

Vers. 15-21. *False witness.* The rule concerning capital charges (chap. xvii. 6) is extended to all accusations before a court of justice. A single witness was not sufficient to convict a man of any civil or criminal offence. Wrong, *lit.*, falling away, apostacy (xiii. 5); here any kind of crime worthy of capital punishment (ver. 19). The accused and the witness were to come before Jehovah, viz., before the priests and judges, at the sanctuary and not before the local court.—*Keil.* If the witness had lied they were to act towards him as he intended towards his brother (*cf.* Prov. xix. 5-9; Dan. vi. 24). The *lex talionis* was applied without reserve (Ex. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20).—*Keil.* Observed in principle, not in letter, by the Jewish courts.—*Speak. Com.*

### CITIES OF REFUGE.—Verses 1-10.

Places of refuge where the guilty and unfortunate could find shelter were not unknown in heathen nations. Greece and Rome had their temples and groves. The *jus asyli*, the right of shelter was ever considered sacred. Cities of Refuge are some of the most delightful types of O. T. economy and may be considered in many ways (*cf.* chap. iv. 41-43). Look at them—



**I. As institutions promoting a spirit of humanity.** They would act beneficially in ages when violence and revenge predominated and when fixed habitations were few. They were founded with a view to abate evils springing from the old-established rights of the blood avenger, and thus created a mild and gentle spirit; gave proof of the superior wisdom and benignant design of the Jewish laws. Impartial trial was given. Love of justice and regard for truth were to overrule sentiment. Revenge was checked, innocent blood was not lightly shed, and human life was considered sacred.

**II. As institutions typical of Gospel truths.** They exhibit the only method of safety, into which if the sinner once enters he will be free from peril. 1. *The manslayer was in danger.* He was pursued by the avenger, and might lose his life. The sinner has broken the law, is exposed to its curse and condemnation—Christ the refuge set before him in the gospel. Should the law reach him before he flees for safety he is undone for ever. 2. *Refuge was easy of access.* The cities were conveniently fixed, and could often be seen. Christ is not a distant refuge, inaccessible or closed against us. "The word is nigh thee, not in heaven above, nor in the depth beneath" (Rom. x. 7, 8). 3. *The way was prepared.* "Prepare thee a way." Every river was bridged, every hillock levelled, and every obstruction that might hurt or hinder taken away. Guides or posts were fixed in every turning and cross road, with the words *refuge, refuge*, to direct the unhappy man in flight. The way of salvation is simple and plain, warfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. Ministers of the gospel are sent to urge, to direct the sinner to the Saviour. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isa. xl. 3). 4. *Restoration was made at the death of the high priest.* The fugitive remained in the city beyond the pursuer's reach, gratuitously housed and taught until this event happened. Then he was released, restored to his relatives and "the land of his possession." In Christ we are restored to the inheritance forfeited by sin, adopted children, and made joint heirs of mansions which He has gone to prepare for those who love Him. Our salvation depends upon exclusive reliance in His merits and atoning death. "There is none other name under heaven" (Acts iv. 12).

### FLIGHT WITHOUT SAFETY.—Verses 11-13.

There was a difference between *accidental* and *intentional* murder. The murderer might flee, but he was not protected in the city of refuge. He was delivered up to be put to death. A fearful picture of disappointed hope.

**I. Flight through atrocious wickedness.** Murder was a sin for which the law provided no remedy. "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer" (Num. xxxv. 31). To murder is to disregard the sanctity of life, resist the claims of our neighbour and demonstrate our hatred to God. Man is encircled by grandeur through his own immortality and his relation to the Infinite Majesty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."

**II. Flight without safety.** "The elders of the city send and fetch him. The murderer is pursued, brought back, and suffers. There is no escape from transgression. The law is broad, "exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96) observes us in all we do, and goes where we go. God and conscience are omnipresent. Memory is alive and retribution is certain. "Murder will out" and "guilt hath no holiday," says Bacon.

III. Flight ending in ruin. "That he may die"—concealment was impossible. The avenger, the priests and the people, were all concerned in the detection and punishment of the criminal. 1. *Ruin without pity*. "Thine eye shall not pity him." 2. *Ruin without remedy*. "He that killeth a man shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xxiv. 17).

Murder may pass unpunished for a time,  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime.—*Dryden*.

### UNFULFILLED PROMISES.—Verses 8-10.

God promised that their dominion should extend from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. xv. 18 ; Ex. xxiii. 31). This promise was never really fulfilled. Hence learn that—

I. God's promises express benevolent purpose. "Enlarge thy coast" (verse 8). They reach far into our future, mark out, define and offer before-hand. They are accompanied by an oath and express the good pleasure of God.

II. The fulfilment of God's promises is conditional. "If the Lord thy God enlarge"—God does not work independently of means and agencies. He is Sovereign and Absolute, but we must co-operate with Him. Nothing is left to chance. Humanly speaking all depends upon us. "If thou shalt keep."

III. This fulfilment is not always realised. There is no change in God, but human conditions are wanting. 1. *There is delay*. This strengthens and fortifies the enemy. When Hanibal could have taken Rome he would not, and when he wished, he was unable. 2. *There is sin*. Disobedience hinders. Unbelief excludes from the land. Israel's enlargement was transient through the sins of the people; conquered nations regained independence, and Solomon's empire was dissolved.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1-6. *Cities*. 1. Cities of refuge divinely appointed. 2. Cities of refuge a protection for innocent blood. 3. Cities of refuge a proof of stringent law—original law not modified—special provision made for accidental manslaughter. 4. Cities of refuge a type of deliverance in Jesus. The atonement is not a violation or suspension of law, yet mercy and deliverance from penalty are given to him who flees to Christ. "The reason of these institutions seems to be this:—*First* of all, their appointment arose from a great law. *Secondly*, they were instituted to be an expressive foreshadow or type of a grand and precious shelter for all the people of God."—*Cumming*.

Ver. 3. *Prepare*. Every facility to

flee. 1. The word nigh. 2. Ministers direct. 3. The Holy Spirit helps.

Ver. 5. *That he die*. 1. Human life taken by trifling accidents. What need for preparation. The sons of men are "snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them" (Ecc. ix. 12). 2. Human life safeguarded by Divine institutions. The law forbids murder. If this happens unintentionally cities are built for refuge. Life is hedged about by law, justice, humanity, and providence.

Vers. 11-13. The cities were no shelter for wilful murder. 1. Mark the origin of the crime. "Hate his neighbour." Cain hated his brother, could not speak peaceably to him, and then killed him. "Whoso *hateth* his

brother is a murderer" (1 Jno. iii. 15). 2. Notice the plot to carry out the design. "Lie in wait for him." Men who thirst for blood hate the upright, and seek to destroy them. Saul sought to murder David, the Jews the Saviour and Paul. Malice will plot. The words and aims of the wicked "are to lie in wait for blood" (Prov. xii. 6).

Ver. 13. *Pity.* 1. Without pity, lest crime should be encouraged, the criminal protected, and society injured. 2. Without pity lest the ends of justice be frustrated and the law of God broken. 3. Without pity, to warn and deter others from the danger.

#### ANCIENT LANDMARKS REMOVED.—*Verse 14.*

Stones indicating boundaries might easily be removed. Ditches could be secretly levelled. This would materially affect property, and be a great evil in a land where territory was distributed by lot. Removal would be—

**I. To disregard ancient custom.** "They of old have set," with care and justice. "Custom is held as law." Fixed law and fixed boundaries should be respected. But many scorn ancient landmarks as relics of bygone days. Impatient of restraint, they seek wider range of thought and action, indulge in novelties, and cry, down with temples, and away with creeds and the Bible!

**II. To violate the law of God.** Heathen nations held every landmark as sacred; honoured every stone and staple as a god without whose aid every field would be subject to contention and strife. God as the proprietor of all the earth sets bounds for Israel, allotted their lands which they held in trust, and bound them in terms imposed by His will (Deut. xxvii. 17). Hence removal of landmarks is violation of His command, and direct insult to His authority.

**III. To defraud our neighbour.** Landmarks were memorials and witnesses of the rights of each man. Removal was selfish and unjust invasion of property. To enlarge your own estate at the expense of your neighbour's is theft. Each one should know his own, and not defraud another by concealment, forgery, or robbery. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him" (Lev. xix. 13; Mark x. 19; 1 Thess. iv. 6).

**IV. To expose to a dreadful curse.** The execration of men is something, but who can bear the curse of God. The field of the fatherless is under Almighty protection. None can arm themselves against Him by entering it. The poor may seem helpless, but special warning is given against their oppression. "Remove not the old landmark, and enter not into the fields of the fatherless (by acts of violence or removal of boundaries) for their Redeemer is mighty, to vindicate outraged innocence" (Prov. xxiii. 10, 11). This in aftertimes was the great affront of national provocation. "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bounds, therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water" (Hos. v. 10).

**I. Landmarks, an indication of Divine care.** Nothing is too insignificant for God's notice. The cities with their roads, the fields with their boundaries, the minute and the vast are under his guardianship. He sets bounds to sea and land and controls each element in its limit (Job xxxviii. 10, 11). **II. Landmarks, a vindication of the rights of property.** Fields and gardens must be cultivated and held as personal estate. Land is not to be indiscriminately portioned out. God gives allotments to men, and personal property is needful for daily employment and healthy life. **III. Landmarks, a check to fraud and rapacity.** They warned against deceitful and unjust actions. We must neither touch nor covet our neighbour's property. The avaricious and



envious are checked by the order of society and the laws of nature. IV. *Landmarks, a motive to neighbourly kindness.* To remove them would injure our neighbour and disturb the community. We are not to sow discord nor create strife and law-suits, but to live peaceably together. "Strive not with a man without cause." V. *Landmarks, symbols of fixed spiritual truths.* There are certain fundamental and established doctrines which must not be removed, which can never be shaken. Rome may remove landmarks of Scripture by her traditions. Impatience of restraint, independence of spirit, and resistance to Divine authority may characterise the age. But the chief landmarks of faith stand solid and impregnable as a rock. "The foundation of God standeth sure."

### THE TRIAL OF CAPITAL OFFENCES.—Verses 15-21.

"The wrong" in verse 16 is not merely falling into idolatry, but any kind of crime worthy of capital punishment (verse 19). One witness even was tested and punished if proved false. Judges were to investigate most carefully and administer justice most rigidly—

I. The testimony of one witness was not enough to condemn (chap. xvii. 6). He might be prejudiced, interested or unable to judge rightly. Individuals are not always truthful and cannot be trusted. Hence it is wise, as proved by history and human experience, that the life of an innocent man should not depend upon the testimony of one witness. What a dishonour cast upon mankind by the law! suspected of unfaithfulness! and what a check to accusers of men!

II. The accuser and the accused were to stand before God. "Both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord" (verse 17). All sin is committed against God. He cannot permit evil to go unpunished. He will expose and visit it with condemnation. 1. Before "the priests and the judges," who represent Him. 2. In the sanctuary, the residence of His glory. This is a picture of future trial, when the sinner will stand before the judgment seat and all iniquity be punished.

III. If the witness was false the punishment was severe. No sentimentalism nor misplaced compassion must be shown to a false witness. The law was inflexible, and one guilty of perjury was doomed to suffer penalty. 1. *Punishment in kind.* "Do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother" (verse 19). The *lex talionis* is applied, a person receives to himself what he gives to another; a law of retribution, which is God's law to warn the transgressor. 2. *Punishment without reserve.* No indifference in the search, "diligent inquisition;"—no hesitation in executing the law; no pity whatever for the criminal. "Thine eye shall not pity" one who had no pity for another. "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Prov. xix. 5).

### A FALSE WITNESS.—Verse 16.

Society cannot exist without laws, and laws cannot be administered without testimony. False witness or perjury therefore is the most obnoxious of crimes, and as such deserves the severest condemnation.

I. A false witness is offensive to God. God is represented as "a God of truth, and without iniquity" (Deut. iii. 2, 4); "a God that cannot lie" (Job i. 2). The perjurer takes His name in vain; dishonours His attributes,

and defies His law. When we prevaricate, conceal truth, or speak lies, we insult the God of heaven, "the faithful and true witness."

**II. A false witness is injurious to society.** In his *heart* he is uncharitable and envious towards his fellow-men. In his *actions* he is mischievous to society. He destroys its confidence, breaks its bonds, and becomes an agent of the devil, "the father of lies" (1 Kings xxi. 13). "The slanderer," says Archbishop Leighton, "wounds three at once; himself, him he speaks of, and him that hears." His cruelty and malice are set forth by three murderous instruments—weapons of death. "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow" (Prov. xxv. 18).

**III. A false witness should be put down by every possible means.** "So shalt thou put the evil away" (verse 19). Everyone is interested in the suppression of crime. Priests, judges, and people—society and the Christian Church are concerned. All should love truth and put down deceit (Col. iii. 9; Rom. iii. 13). "That shalt not raise (*marg. receive*) a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness" (Ex. xxiii. 1).

Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie;  
The fault that needs it most grows two thereby.

#### THE LAW OF RETALIATION.—Verses 19-21.

Among the Israelites and in all nations where slavery existed, or where owners had the power of punishment in their own hands, the exercise of absolute authority was liable to be abused. Hence the importance and place of this law.

**I. Its use in the Old Testament.** It is probable that the law existed before the time of Moses, and was accepted by him as tolerable. It would be suitable—  
1. *As an elementary principle of justice.* Theoretically it seems exact and right. It was accepted by magistrates as a rule in civil law. It is found in the code of primitive nations, recognised by the laws of Solon, by ancient Indians, and by the Thurians (*cf. Speak. Com.*; Ex. xxi. 22-25). It is the first lesson of civilization and public justice. "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye," etc. (Ex. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20).  
2. *As a foundation of public morality.* Power is often abused. Men forget and break the golden rule. Human life must be respected, wrong rectified, and laws administered. There must be no connivance in guilt. "Hand for hand, foot for foot."  
3. *As a check to private revenge.* "Revenge is sweet," and men like to take law into their own hands. The law of the eternal must be asserted and vindictive tempers subdued. "He that studieth revenge keepeth his wounds open."—*Bacon*. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord."

**II. Its exposition in the New Testament.** The scribes took their stand on the letter, disregarded the design and spirit of the law, and expounded in the wrong direction. Their popular casuistry made it one of private retaliation and not of judicial action. But the disciple of Christ, in suffering wrong, must cherish no desire to retaliate and accuse. He must be prepared in word and act to show the spirit of his master. The letter may not bind, but the principle should be the law of life. We are not to revenge, but cultivate the habit of non-resistance to evil (*cf. Mat. v. 38-42*). The law of the New Testament is not contradictory to that of the Old Testament. It is more than a civil enactment. It is forbearance with those who wrong us, well-doing to those who hate us, the characteristic and image of God's children (Mat. v. 48).

And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.

*The law of requital.* 1. *A doctrine of scripture.* "As I have done, so God hath requited me" (Jud. i. 7). "The Lord of recompenses shall surely requite." "With what measure ye mete," etc. "A false witness shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xix. 5-9). 2. *A law of providence.* Men may deny and disregard it; but they cannot destroy, cannot escape this righteous and holy law. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. "He that speaketh lies shall not escape." 3. *A reason for submission to God.* Indulge in no passion. Fret not because of evil doers. It costs more to revenge injuries than to bear them. Events are not under the control of wicked men. "Say not, then, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord and He shall save thee."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-21. Learn.—1. Great wickedness often found among men—murder, fraud, perjury. Oppressive to society, insulting to God, and abounding even in Christian countries. 2. Divine methods of overcoming this wickedness. By religious laws and social restraints, by functions of state and spiritual institutions. What a debt we owe to the gospel which renews and controls man, elevates and purifies society!

Vers. 16-19. *False witness.* 1. God is a God of truth, promotes it in the world and seeks it in His people. 2. Truth should be sacred to us in all circumstances of life. 3. The danger of lying. 4. The necessity of grace and prayer.

Ver. 19. *Retribution.* 1. An appointment of God in social and civil, in national and individual life. 2. A warning to others. Sir W. Raleigh, challenged by a hot-headed youth,

refused to fight. The young man spat in his face in public. Thinking of the consequences, Sir W. calmly wiped his face and replied, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I can this injury from my face, I would this moment take away your life."

Ver. 20. *Hear.* Others' woes should be our warnings, others' sufferings our sermons (1 Cor. x. 5-12). God's house of correction is the school of instruction.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 19-21. *Pity and justice.* 1. Justice from the highest source of the land. The presence and the representatives of God. 2. Justice without pity. Right better than pity. 3. Justice for public good. "Those which remain hear and commit no more evil." Life often sacrificed for the welfare of the community. True patriotism displayed in the suppression of crime.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1-10 *Cities.* A party of travellers in the desert were overtaken by the fierce simoon. Like blinding snow driven by the winds of March came the hot sands. Before the simoon had reached its height they came suddenly upon a rude building of stone, well protected with roof and doors, which the hand of charity had erected there in the desert for shelter. With joy they rushed into it, closed the doors, and were safe.

"The wonders of life and gladness,  
All the wonders of hope and fear;  
The wonders of death and sadness,  
All the wonders of time are there."  
—Bonar.

Ver. 11. *Hate.* Whoever hates kills the soul.—*Vinet.* A true man hates no one.—*Napoleon I.* "From envy, hatred and malice," etc.

Ver. 12. *Deliver him.* By the conviction and execution of a murderer,  
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humanity is not extinguished but enlarged; it is individual compassion overcome by a regard to the general good.—*A. Fuller.*

Ver. 14. *Landmarks removed.* Covetousness, by a greediness of getting more, deprives itself of the true end of getting it; it loses the enjoyment of what it has got.—*Sprat.* Desire of having is the sin of covetousness.—*Shakspeare.*

Ver. 18. *False witness.*

Sworn on every slight pretence,  
Till perjuries are common as bad pence;  
While thousands, careless of the dawning sin,  
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look within.  
—*Cowper.*

Vers. 19-21. *Not pity.* Most just it is that he who breweth mischief should have the first draught of it himself.—*Jemmat.*

Revenge at first, though sweet,  
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils.  
—*Milton.*

## CHAPTER XX.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Reverence for life, and that which tends to preserve it, was the motive for laws given in last chapter. The same is the basis of those in this chapter. Even in time of war, forbearance was to be exercised in respect of Israelites themselves who are levied for war (vers. 1-9); in respect of the enemy (vers. 10-15); Canaanitish nations alone excepted (vers. 16-18); and in respect of the property of the vanquished. (*Speak. Com.*)

Vers. 1-9. *Instructions for military service.* Prospective in nature, but of permanent authority; not a temporary arrangement in prospect of war, but standing orders in future settlement of Israel. *Horses*, the chief strength of nations surrounding (Ex. xiv. 7; Josh. xvii. 6; Jud. iv. 3).

Ver. 2. *Priest*, not high priest, but one appointed; called by Rabbins "the anointed of war," like Phinehas (Num. xxxi. 6), who exhorted the people in formula (vers. 3 and 4). *Tremble, lit.*, make haste, as if confused.

Vers. 5-7. *Officers, i.e.*, the Shoterim, roll-keepers (Ex. v. 6-10) (*Sept.* scribes), whose duty to muster men and announce orders of generals (2 Chr. xxvi. 11). Exemptions given. *Dedicated* the house on taking possession, by certain religious ceremonies (*cf.* Neh. xii. 27; Ps. xlv.) (title). A yearly immunity. *Eaten* (ver. 6), *lit.*, made it common. When fruit trees were planted (Lev. xix. 23) and vines set (Jud. xix. 24) fruit was not eaten the first four years, but set apart from common uses. *Betrothed*, always considerable time before marriage. *Faint* (ver. 8), *melt*, or *flow down*, become despondent (Gen. xvii. 15; Jos. vii. 5). *Captains* at the head of the people, in smaller levies (vers. 10-20). Instructions concerning *sieges*, to prevent wanton destruction of life and property.

Ver. 10. If towns peaceably surrendered, armed men were not put to death. Offensive wars not encouraged. *Tributaries* conquered nations would become servants, yet receive the highest blessings in alliance with Israel (2 Sam. xx. 18-20). If besieged cities refused to capitulate, those found in arms, *every male* put to death. Women and children kindly treated (ver. 14).

Vers. 15-18. With Canaanitish towns Israel was not to act thus. *These people* put under the ban must be exterminated. *Nothing that breatheth, lit.* every breath by which human beings alone are understood (*cf.* Jo-h. x. 40; xi. 11, with chap. xi. 14). If the siege was long, *trees* were not cut down (ver. 19). Various renderings have been given of this difficult text. The general sense seems to be that man's life depends upon the fruit of the trees, in a sense he is identified with them; their destruction would be a sort of sacrilege, and would diminish fuel and hinder military operations. *Trees* whose fruit not edible, cut down and used for ramparts in siege (Ezek. iv. 2).

## RIGHTEOUS WAR.—Verses 1-5.

Israel was not a warlike nation, but they were about to enter into serious conflict with other nations. In future years they might have to maintain their

independence and defend themselves from aggression. Instructions are given to show the spirit in which war must be undertaken, carried on and finished. If war was inevitable the Providence of God would lead them into it. That would be righteous war.

**I. War undertaken to accomplish the purpose of God.** Israel undertook war, not of their own accord; not for selfish aggrandisement nor to realise ambitious schemes. They were commanded by God to possess the land. Fearful may be the consequences of rash and inconsiderate war. "In the name of our God we will set up our banners."

**II. War sanctioned by the will of God.** Every nation prays for its armies; but no war in which the presence of God cannot be expected is justifiable. 1. *God's will is ascertained by His presence.* "The Lord thy God is with thee." God may permit enterprises, but never helps them when they oppose His will. Israel rebelled, "went presumptuously up into the hill; God went not with them and they were smitten by the Amorites (Deut. i. 43, 44). 2. *God's will is declared by His servants.* "The priest shall approach and speak unto the people." They are not mere captains of the army, but ministers of God, reminding of the past and encouraging for the present. Their presence and help indicate God's purpose. "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever" (Num. x. 8).

**III. War conducted by the precepts of God.** Here are specific directions, commands from God concerning war. War unprovoked and for unlawful conquest finds no sanction in God's word. When it becomes a necessity to defend ourselves and punish evil doers, when it cannot justly be avoided, "The belligerent nation then becomes the executioner of Divine judgments, but it must also know and confess that it is used by God for this purpose, and that it only carries on war aright when it does so with this conviction. Then only can we come before God with confidence and a good conscience, because it is His will that we have performed; and every wilfully undertaken war forbids our having free and happy access to God."—*Luthardt*. "Every purpose is established by counsel, and with good advice make war."

### CHRISTIAN LIFE A WARFARE.

In war, God alone was Israel's confidence. Their enemies might excel in numbers and in military strength, but they were not to be afraid. God would protect and help them.

**I. This warfare is against mighty enemies.** Surrounding nations were often a terror to Israel. The Christian fights against powerful odds; principalities and powers in earthly and heavenly places. 1. *Enemies great in number.* "A people more than thou." God is not always with the strongest battalions. Numbers are often ranged against Him and His people. But He counts nations as nothing and less than nothing. 2. *Enemies terrible in equipment.* Horses and chariots were most formidable elements of ancient nations. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses," but that is confidence vain and displeasing to God. Glorious were the victories when Israel renounced trust in human strength. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety (victory) is of the Lord."

**II. In this warfare right men are wanted.** Every soldier is not valiant. Gideon's army was sifted, and many in Israel were sent away for lack of faith and enthusiasm. 1. *Good leaders are wanted.* Men "anointed for war," as

the Rabbins called the priests—men of the stamp of Henry Havelock and Hedley Vicars. Men of undaunted courage, strong in God and prepared to lead. 2. *Good soldiers are wanted.* Soldiers who can endure hardness. *a. Soldiers conscious of right.* For if a man feels that he is in the wrong, he fears detection, disgrace and punishment. Macbeth started at the whisper of every wind. "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful."—*Shakspeare.* *b. Soldiers willing to serve.* Volunteers, not pressed men. None can be forced. Service that is forced is weakness and useless. Our hearts must be in the conflict or we fight in vain. *c. Soldiers full of courage.* The faint-hearted injure the *morale* of the troops. Fear is contagious and leads to flight. Beware of this infection, "neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid" (Is. viii. 12).

III. In this warfare we should not be disheartened. "Let not your hearts faint; fear not, and do not tremble." Why be terrified? Opponents flee before a brave man. "One of you shall chase a thousand." 1. *God's providence encourages us.* "Brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." There is constant reference to this deliverance most striking and instructive. History unfolds Divine providence; abounds with proofs of omnipotence, and pledges of help. Examples are cited to animate to fortitude and virtue. 2. *God's presence is with us.* "The Lord thy God is with thee." Not merely as commander, but "goeth with you" into the greatest danger. Not as a spectator, like Xerxes, who viewed the conflict from on high, but "to fight for you" with the determination "to save you." "The Lord thy God, *He* it is," not a common general, "that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

#### THE EXEMPTIONS IN WAR.—Verse 5-9.

Soldiers must be as free from care and cowardice as possible. Wellington declared "that the power of the greatest armies depends upon what the individual soldier is capable of doing and bearing." Four classes are here exempted:—

I. *Those involved in business.* The soldier leaves his private business when he enlists to serve his country. The farmer leaves his plough, the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store. In Israel those were not called to serve who, from circumstances and prospects, would feel most keenly the hardship. 1. *Those engaged in dedicating a house.* They must return to their house lest another dedicate it. 2. *Those engaged in planting a vineyard* must enjoy the fruit of it. Building and planting are good and needful for the community, but encumber the soldier.

II. *Those hindered by social ties.* "What man hath betrothed a wife and not taken her" (ver. 7; chap. xxiv. 5). "It was deemed a great hardship to leave a house unfinished, a new property half-cultivated, and a recently contracted marriage unconsummated, and the exemptions allowed in these cases were founded on the principle, that a man's heart being deeply engrossed with something at a distance, he would not be very enthusiastic in the public service." (*Jamieson*). In an army there should be one heart, one purpose and one desire to please the commander. In the *corps* of Christian soldiers there is entire obedience to the will of the Captain of our Salvation. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

III. *Those deficient in personal qualifications.* The fearful and faint-hearted were not permitted to war. 1. *In moral qualifications.* Some think that the



fear named arose from an evil conscience which makes a man afraid of danger and death. Men of loose and profligate lives are often cowards and curses to an army. Hence those conscious of guilt were to be sent away. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." "Conscience makes cowards of us all." 2. *In natural qualification.* The allusion seems to be natural cowardice. Men reverence bravery, but cowards are objects of scorn. Wellington said of some foreigners who ran away from the field of Waterloo, "Let them go; we are better without them." There must be no fear in officers or men. No cowards in the ranks lest the army flee before the enemy. "Let him go and return unto his house lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 1. *Fear forbidden.*** Israel had seen little of war, only a few brushes in their journey with inferior adversaries. Things would soon become more serious. Hence alarm and need of admonition and encouragement. All Christians are soldiers and wage a good warfare. It is a necessary and trying warfare—continues through every season and in every condition. The forces of their enemies may be superior in number, vigilance, wisdom and might. Hence danger of alarm and need of fortitude in the warrior. None have better grounds for courage than we, not in ourselves for then we must fail. *First*, the Divine presence: "For the Lord thy God is with thee." Antigonus said to his troops, dismayed at the numbers of the foe, "How many do you reckon me for?" But God is all-wise and almighty. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and if He be with us, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." *Secondly*, His agency: "Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." To a Jew, this was not only a proof but a pledge; not only showed what He *could* do, but was a voucher of what He *would* do. He is always the same, and never suffers what he has done to be undone. Strange would it have been, after opening a passage through the sea, to have drowned them in Jordan. What would have been thought of His great name, after placing himself at their head to lead them to Canaan, if He had suffered them to be overcome

by the way? He, who begins the work, is not only able to finish, but begins it for the very purpose. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?"—*Jay*.

**Vers. 2, 3. *The priest helping the soldier.*** The priest shall approach and speak unto the people. "A minister of peace an advocate of war" only when war is justified. Even then only in showing how to regulate, mitigate, and direct it. Learn—1. The connection of religion with war in its sanctions and inspirations. 2. The business of the priest to caution the leaders and encourage the soldiers in a righteous contest.

**Ver. 5. *Building and dedicating a house.*** 1. By liberality to the poor. Festive ceremonies and entertainments were given. 2. By consecrating it to God through whose aid it had been built and by whose blessing it would prosper. There should be a family altar and a family religion. "A church in the house" (Psalm 30th—compare title). This the best ornament and defence of the house.

**Ver. 8. *Faint-hearted.*** 1. Cowardice weakens—faint, fear, tremble and terrify (ver. 3) are degrees of weakness. 2. Cowardice renders incapable of right impressions. Let not your hearts be *tender* to receive impressions of fear and despair. Melting hearts are like hot iron, capable of any impression. "*Steel*

your hearts." 3. Cowardice affects others. "Lest his brethren's heart faint."

Ver. 5-9. *Defective armies* (churches or organizations). 1. Requiring to be sifted. The incapable and unfit sent home. 2. Requiring to be re-organized. "Captains" chosen fit "to lead the

people." Defects remedied and efficiency secured. Much to be done before the Christian Church can fight and conquer the world.

*Christianity and Heroism.* Christianity makes true heroes in war. Rulers in church and state should be chosen on account of spiritual or Christian character.

### THE METHOD OF CONDUCTING WAR.—*Verses 10-15.*

When Israel came nigh a city not belonging to the Canaanites, they were to summon it to peaceable surrender and submission (Jud. xxi. 13). Moses does not encourage aggressive war. If the town resisted a regular siege was undertaken, and when captured males were slain, women and children spared, and booty appropriated to their own use.

I. Try mild measures before severe. Even in war there should be honour and justice. 1. *Offer peace before war.* "Proclaim peace unto it." In the settlement of quarrels, be ready to give and to submit to arbitration, proposals of peace. God in mercy offers peace to sinners—has no pleasure in their destruction, but beseeches them to be reconciled to Him. 2. *Make men tributary rather than exterminate them.* If peace proposals were accepted, they must acknowledge the supremacy of Israel by tribute-money. They must renounce idolatry and become servants. Then their conquerors would be their protectors. If we yield to God and become His servants, we shall not only be saved from destruction, but become fellow-citizens with saints and members of God's household.

II. Display the spirit of humanity. In most barbarous times this has often been seen. Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon were not devoid of feeling. 1. *Spare property.* Cities not plundered, trees not destroyed. Cattle and spoil to be appropriated to personal use. 2. *Spare human lives.* Helpless women and innocent children not to be touched. Here is a degree of self-control not displayed in modern Christian warfare.

### A WAR OF EXTERMINATION.—*Verses 16-18.*

The Canaanites were to be completely exterminated. They fell under the judicial displeasure of God and were utterly ruined, as the only means to preserve Israel from moral corruption. Learn—

I. That men may become so wicked that utter ruin ensues. Of cities given to Israel no remnant of inhabitants must be spared. Canaanites must not share with Israelites in the land of promise. No terms of peace were offered them. They had filled up the measure of iniquity; had become totally averse to God; and were abandoned to their awful doom. Their punishment was not the execution of revenge upon enemies, but the result of their own wickedness, the fulfilment of a Divine sentence upon that wickedness. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

II. This utter ruin ensues lest the people of God should be endangered. Israel would have been corrupted by the lives and idolatry of Canaanites.

God's people are morally endangered by the pollutions and customs of the world. God is concerned for their character and preservation (Ex. xxxiv. 11-16). He loves them, and has given men for them, and people for their life (Is. xliii. 4). "That they teach you not to do after their abominations."

III. What a warning this utter ruin should be to all. First to God's people. What a motive for separation from sin and the world! What an argument for obedience when the disobedient are punished so fearfully. War against sin should be one of extermination. The least evil, if spared, may ruin the character. But to the impenitent and ungodly, here is a picture of the destruction which awaits them unless found in Christ. They are reserved "unto the judgment of the great day."

#### PRESERVATION OF FRUIT TREES.—Verses 19, 20.

In carrying on war, leaders are apt to indulge in passion and destroy everything within reach. In a long siege, Israel might use non-fruit-bearing trees, but those bearing fruit were not to be touched.

I. God's laws are intended to check unlawful feeling and action. God is more merciful than we are. Food trees and human life have been wantonly destroyed, and military rage is often most furious. The ravages of war must be checked. A voice must be heard, above the tramp of horsemen and the command of kings. "Thou shalt not."

II. God's laws prohibit any wilful waste at all times. God ever consults our interests and economises our resources. "The Jews," says Henry, "understand this as a prohibition of all wilful waste upon any account whatsoever. No fruit tree is to be destroyed, unless it be barren and cumber the ground. Nay, they maintain, 'Whoso wilfully breaks vessels, tears clothes, stops wells, pulls down buildings, or destroys meat, transgresses this law. Thou shalt not destroy.'" Broken fragments must be gathered up, that nothing be lost. Every creature is good in its end, and nothing must be refused or abused.

#### ON SPARING FRUIT TREES.

What are the lessons touching our own life which are suggested by this exemption? 1. Spare the fruit trees,—*Then men are to be self-controlled under the most exciting circumstances.* Jews were to bear this restriction in mind at a time when most intensely excited. It was not to be remembered in moments of tranquilly, but to be sent before them, when fiercest passions were ablaze. We have been taught "that all is fair in war"—this law contradicts that proverbial morality. We are not to excuse wantonness by pleading excitement of circumstances. Beautiful the provision that in the keenest contest there was to be recollection of law! It should be so in our lives. In this day of fierce competition men are in danger of giving themselves up to passion, rather than judgement, and pleading the pressure of circumstances as an excuse for doing some things they would never think of doing in calmer moments. Such plea is vicious. Even in battle men are not to lose reflectiveness, in the presence of death they must remember the law of God. 2. Spare the fruit trees. *Then do not force a present victory at the expense of future suffering.* Victories may cost too much. What, if after conquest, we have cut off sources of supply



and left ourselves without bread and water? The frequent question should be not, can I reach yonder point? but can I reach it without sacrificing obedience to divine law? You may get your own way in life, but what if you have to burn an orchard in doing so? A fruit tree standing between you and victory may appear a small thing, but that small thing represents the sources at which life renews itself. What if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

3. Spare the fruit trees. *Then judge all things by their highest usefulness and not by their temporary advantages.* The tree might have been useful for bulwarks but there was a higher use to which it could be put, and its treatment was determined by this higher use. Things are not judged by their meanest, but by their highest possibilities. Are we living along the line of our highest capabilities, or consulting the conveniences of the passing moment? Who can find a fruit tree being cut down to help a man over a brooklet, when the meanest gate-post would have done just as well? Yet men lie in the dust, when they could exert most beneficial influence upon society. "Aim high, for he who aimeth at the sky shoots higher far than he who means a tree."

4. Spare the fruit trees. *Then man has it in his power to inflict great mischief upon himself and upon society.* You can cut down. You have power to do mischief, but not right. A man may show strength in cutting down, but if he knew it he would show far greater strength in not doing so. Forbearance is often the last point of power. What is the Christian application of all this?

1. All in Christ Jesus are expected to bear fruit. 2. Only as Christians bear fruit will they be spared by Jesus Christ Himself. 3. Only in so far as Christians bear fruit ought they to receive toleration at the hands of society. 4. It is possible to bring forth evil fruit. 5. Fruit trees must be pruned. "That ye may bring forth much fruit" (Vol. III., *The City Temple*).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 10-15. *Mercy and wrath.*

I. Offered mercy precedes the execution of wrath. 1. A city besieged. 2. Summons to surrender; city not to fall by sudden surprise, or unwarned. 3. Offer of peace. II. Condign punishment follows rejected mercy. Such rebels, if permitted to escape, would raise the standard of revolt elsewhere, and strengthen the resistance of other towns. Learn—1. The gospel a message of reconciliation. 2. The gospel accepted brings peace. 3. The gospel rejected declares the eternal ruin of the rejector.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 19. Our interpretation of the primeval law of food is strongly confirmed by this passage and the essential wickedness of destroying the sources of human sustenance and comfort. The idea is that the tree which God planted is for all the children of men who pass

by or dwell near, and need its fruit for food—a permanent supply, which no temporary exigency must be suffered to destroy. The Mahomedans to this day observe this law, and a curious story is related of the Arabian prophet, that when on one occasion in the siege of a fortress, prolonged by the access of the besieged during the night to the date palms outside its walls, he ordered some of his personal followers secretly to cut down these palm trees, his soldiers next morning remonstrated, so that Mahommed had to invent a special commission for the work, which however, he never afterwards repeated. (*Temperance Com.*) Fruit trees might not be destroyed. Doth God take care for trees? It was to teach us that if we bring forth fruit fit for God's taste and relish, sanctifying God and Christ in our hearts, we shall not be destroyed.—*Trapp.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1. *Battle.* On the whole subject of Old Testament wars we give an extract from a paper read at the Church Congress last week (Oct. 14, 1885):—"The Old Testament takes man as he is, with savage, war-like instincts, and does not ignore his nature and proclaim at once the reign of peace. But the people are taught to see war in a new light. It is taken out of the hands of man and becomes God's prerogative. Man wages war only as his vice-regent. He is fighting 'the battle of the Lord.' There is nothing *personal* in the campaigns of Israelites, nothing *national* except so far as the cause of Israel is the cause of God. It is a great advance in civilization when men neither take the law into their own hands nor suffer a relative to be the avenger of blood, but trust to the administration of impersonal law. Revenge, which in the individual is a kind of wild justice, is then transformed into that righteous indignation which is the root of the judicial system. This was the first, the indirect blow to the war-spirit of the Jews. But they had more to learn—that God is a God of battles is only a half truth. The higher truth was dimly shadowed forth when the patriarchal conqueror did homage to the mysterious King of Peace—when the wars of conquest were over and the chosen people established in the land their King, 'a man of war' is forbidden to build the temple and the honour given to 'a man of rest.' From first to last the Jews were taught that the explanation of the present is in the future, and as this kingdom becomes clearer it is revealed as a kingdom of peace. This Old Testament teaching in respect to war is *propædæutic*, leading men on by little and little till they could sit at the feet of Jesus; and *provisional*,

destroyed only by being fulfilled."—*Rev. Aubrey L. Moore.*

Vers. 1, 4. *God with thee.* When the Crusaders encamped before Jerusalem, a terrible struggle ensued. The Saracens, who possessed the city, bore down upon them in countless numbers, and it seemed as though all was lost to the Christian army. All at once a joyful cry rang through the ranks—"St. James is with us! He fights on our side!" In the excitement of the conflict some of them fancied they saw the apostle in the clouds advancing to help them! It gave them new courage. They rushed forward with an energy which could not be withstood, and the battle was won.

Vers. 5-9. Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was to exclude them from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit—*A. Barnes.*

Ver. 9. *Lead.* Like Hannibal, whom Livy says was first in battle and last out of it.

Ver. 10. *Peace.* When Alexander besieged a city, he sent an herald into it with burning torch in hand, to proclaim that if any man would repair and submit to him while the torch was burning, he should be saved; otherwise they might expect nothing but fire and sword. Tamerlane, when he came against any place, first hung out a white flag of grace, then a red, and lastly a black flag, to show that now there was no hope of mercy.—*Trapp.*

## CHAPTER XXL

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The reason for grouping these five laws, apparently so different from one another, as well as for attaching them to the previous regulations is found in the desire to bring out distinctly the sacredness of life and of personal rights from every point of view, and impress it upon the covenant nation.—(*Keil*).

**Vers. 1-9. Expiation of unknown murder.** *Lying*, fallen, then lying (Jud. iii. 25). **Ver. 2. Elders.** Representing citizens. *Judges.* Administrators of right. *City.* The nearest responsible for cleansing rites. The heifer, which had done no work, strong and of full growth, not ceremonially profaned by human use (*cf.* Ex. xx. 25), had to die instead of the murderer who could not be found. **Ver. 4. Rough.** A valley through which water constantly flowed, suitable for cleansing. *Eared.* Neither ploughed nor sown. **Ver. 5. Priest.** Whom Jehovah had chosen to serve Him, was present, not to conduct the affair but to see that the rite was duly performed and accredit it when done so. **Ver. 6. Wash.** A symbolic act declaring innocence and repudiating connection with the crime. **Ver. 7. Answer** for all the people. *Merciful.* Be propitiated towards us; *lit.*, cover this guilt (Lev. i. 4). *Blood*, *i.e.*, bloodshed; the murder forgiven.

**Ver. 10-14. A Captive Wife.** Customary in ancient war for the victor to make a female captive a slave. Moses checks severities and shows superior treatment. *Shave, pare, lit.*, prepare, by cutting her nails to proper size and form. (2 Sam. xix. 25.) Both customary signs of purification (cutting the hair *cf.* Lev. xiv. 8; Num. viii. 7). Symbols of passing out of the state of a slave into reception of fellowship with the covenant nation. This obvious by her laying aside prisoner's clothes.—*Keil.* *Bewail.* This prescribed from motives of humanity that the woman might have time and leisure to detach her affections from their natural ties and prepare her mind for new ones.—*Speak. Com.* *Merchandise, lit.*, treat her with constraint, or as a slave. *Humbled* in taking her captive and then refusing the place and honour of a wife.

**Vers. 15-17. The Right of the Firstborn.** If a man had two wives, one beloved the other *hated*, loved less (*cf.* Leah and Rachel, wives of Jacob), the firstborn by the hated one must be treated as such. In the division of property he must have *double* (ver. 17), a portion equal to that of two; consequently the firstborn inherited twice as much as the other sons. Paternal authority could set aside these rights on just grounds (Gen. xxvii. 33), but must not do so from mere partiality.

**Ver. 18-21. Punishment of a disobedient son.** *Rebellious* whom milder measures failed to reclaim. *Elders*, as magistrates of a domestic kind, received the accusation of parents and upheld their authority; but prevented private acts of injustice. *Gate.* He was stoned by all the men of the town and treated as a blasphemer. Rebellion against parental authority struck at the social fabric and must be severely punished.

**Vers. 22, 23. Burial of those hanged.** *Sin, lit.*, a right of death; *i.e.*, capital offence. *Hanged.* a curse of God, inflicted by God. *Remain*, the preceding command "to put away evil," must now be observed. *Defiled* by exposing the corpse, especially the body of one guilty of such a crime as to deserve this fate (*cf.* Gal. iii. 13).

## UNKNOWN CRIME.—Verses 1-9.

Preceding laws indicate vigorous and effectual punishment of wilful murder. But if the murderer escaped they were not free, and the land was not unpolluted. A great ceremony was appointed to put away guilt and express detestation and innocence.

**I. The criminal escaping.** "Not known who hath slain him." Crime may be committed in darkness and concealment. Men may evade laws most vigilant and severe, and think they can escape; but God's providence brings dark deeds to light, and strange things have led to the detection of guilt. The earth may disclose her blood (Isa. xxvi. 21) in time; if not, the future will reveal the righteous judgment of God when that which is past will be required (Eccles. iii. 15).

**II. The community responsible for his crime.** Blame is attached to Israel in some form or other, and they had to cleanse themselves. Society is bound



together for mutual help and good government. We are responsible not only for what we can *do*, but for what we can *prevent*. We must not only reform abuses and remove grievances, but prevent evils. Many among us are physically and morally dead. Have we done what we could to prevent death or restore to life? Is not our indifference a crime in the sight of God? "These ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone."

**III. The whole community should endeavour to prevent crime.** A sense of responsibility should quicken its action. Immorality and outrages drive away capital, create discontent and insecurity. There must be no impunity of murder, no impunity of any public crime. All classes of the community are concerned. Elders, judges, and priests should be anxious for public purity. Society, with its governors and laws; governors commissioned from heaven, and laws rooted in the revealed will of God; not only claim, but enforce obedience. The land must be purged from blood by public confession, prayer, and righteous conduct. "So shalt thou purge away the guilt," etc.

### EXPIATION OF UNKNOWN MURDER.

The sanctity of human life is still the leading thought, and when a corpse is found "lying in the field and it be not known who hath slain him," the land is regarded as guilty before God (verse 8) until a solemn rite of expiation be gone through. Verses 1-9 of this chapter prescribe the mode and form of this expiation, which, from the nature of the case, could take place only when the people were settled in Canaan, and so is prescribed first in Deuteronomy.—*Speak Com.*

**I. The imputed guilt of murder.** The law increased the horror of the crime. The administrators of law measured the distance from the slain man to the nearest city, and laid upon it the duty of expiation. A sense of guilt fills all classes of the community, and the people by their representatives cleanse themselves by appointed rites.

**II. The solemn expiation of imputed guilt.** When crime cannot be traced to its origin—when it is committed in open day and in defiance of law; it is most humiliating. All must purge themselves from suspicion and connivance. "Be not partakers of other men's sins." 1. *By animal sacrifice.* An heifer strong and vigorous, unaccustomed to the yoke and not profaned by labour had to be killed. 2. *By public confession.* The elders by a significant act repudiated the charge of bloodguiltiness and confessed their innocence. 3. *By direct intercession.* Mercy was implored for the cities and the nation. We have great need to cry to God for our land filled with iniquity and stained with guilt. "Be merciful O Lord to Thy people Israel" (v. 8).

The important lessons of this expiation. The ceremony was public, impressive and admonitory. 1. *The extreme guilt of murder.* The people were to dread blood which defiled the hands which shed it. "Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean" (Isa. i. 15, 16); and crime which polluted the land in which it was committed. 2. *The necessity of atonement for guilt.* The crime was not passed in silence. The people were not permitted to be unconcerned. Justice must be done and satisfaction given. 3. *The provision made by God for the pardon of guilt.* Many think this is a symbol of atonement in Christ, to whom our guilt was imputed and in whom we receive pardon and peace. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

### GOD'S VALUE OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE.—*Verses 1-9.*

"This narrative," says one, "sets forth the preciousness of human life in the sight of God." Dr. Jamieson believes this singular statute concerning homicide is far superior to what is found in the criminal code of any other ancient nation, and is undoubtedly the origin or germ of the modern coroners' inquests. (*Cf. Com. in loco.*)

**I. Discovered in the loss of one man.** Only one missing! But God counts men as well as stars, and "gathers one by one." Ancient philosophy and modern socialism overlook personality, and legislate for men in a mass. The individual exists only for the race, has no rights, and becomes a tool or slave of society. Christianity does not belittle man, but recognises and renews individuals, exalts them to responsibility, and appeals to them for right. "Adam, where art thou?"

**II. Discovered in the injury to one man.** One man was missing, but he was murdered. His blood, like that of Abel, was crying for justice. God's image was defaced in humanity. Society was wounded in one of its members. An enquiry was demanded, and the reproach must be wiped away.

**III. Discovered in the interest which the community should take in one man.** "Am I my brother's keeper?" Formerly heavy fines were inflicted on districts to prevent the murder of Danes and Normans by exasperated Englishmen. We are members one of another; related one to another, and none of us can turn away like Cain.

**IV. Discovered in the provision made for every man's salvation.** Christ died for one and for all. He is not willing that any should perish. It is not the will of God "that *one* of these little ones should perish." "If one sheep goes astray, the ninety and nine are left by the shepherd. He seeks the one that is lost, and its restoration brings greater joy than over all the remainder." "Dost thou believe?"

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 4.** The place where the remembrance of blood is, is not suited for cultivation and joy, but for sorrow and awe, and penitential desolation; it is an Aceldama!—*Wordsworth*. The spot of ground on which the sacrifice was made must be *uncultivated*, because it was to be a sacrifice to make atonement for the murder, and consequently would *pollute* the land. This regulation was calculated (1) to keep murder in abhorrence, (2) to make the magistrates alert in their office, that delinquents might be discovered and punished, and that public expense saved.—*A. Clarke*.

**Vers. 1-9.** *Expiating unknown murder.* We shall endeavour—1. To explain the ordinance. In doing this we must notice—1. Its general design. God intended by this law (1) to prevent the commission of murder; (2) to provide means for removing guilt from His land. 2. Its particular provisions: the victim, the death, the place; the protestations and petitions of the elders. II. To point out some lessons which may be learned from it. 1. The importance of preventing or punishing sin. 2. The comfort of a good conscience. 3. The efficacy of united faith and prayer.—*C. Simeon*.

THE CAPTIVE WOMAN.—*Verses 10-14.*

When a female was taken from surrounding nations and not of the Canaanites and the victor, captivated by her beauty, contemplated marriage, a month was allowed to elapse, that she might bewail the loss of parents and become reconciled to her altered condition. Learn from this—

**I. The Divine protection of woman.** She was allowed to mourn, not to be abused, and might be set at liberty or become the wife of a Jew. The oppression of woman has been a crying evil in all countries. In the Old Testament we have hints concerning her equality, dignity and influence. But Christianity has exalted her to her lawful position as “the help meet” of man.

**II. The mitigating power of love.** Even in war woman may captivate by beauty and relieve by compassion. Man must control unlawful passion and defend the helpless. “Love rules the court and the camp,” removes mighty evils and wins great victories.

“What love can do, that dares love attempt.”—*Shakespeare.*

**II. The consummation of honourable marriage.** “She shall be thy wife,” not through lust but real love. “Marriage has always been the conclusion of love,” said Napoleon. Men should not be drifted into marriage, nor enter it with sordid motives. Mutual society, help and comfort, both in prosperity and adversity, is the chief end of marriage. “Marriage is honourable,” etc.

DIGNITY AND NEEDFUL DISCIPLINE.

The captured slave had prospects of conjugal union. But time was to intervene, natural feeling respected, and the contemplated elevation gained by lawful steps.

**I. Prospective elevation.** A higher life and real dignity were before her. From a slave, mere property, she could become a Jewish mistress, invested with inalienated rights and shielded by sacred law. God's providence opens wonderful prospects to meanest subjects and elevates them to rank and dignity. Woman's creation indicates the benevolent purpose of God. She is not given for grovelling and selfish ends, which many philosophers and some professed Christians declare to be the chief design of her existence. Christianity elevates her to equal spiritual dignity, to be the mental and moral companion with man. She has yet to bless our homes, enrich our literature and rule our empires.

**II. Needful discipline and delay.** Delay often required, for haste in this matter is risky. Early marriage a curse. “Married in haste repent at leisure.”

1. *In kindness to the woman.* She was to receive considerate treatment. Incidents of war no excuse for undue licence. Kindness must be shown to all placed at our mercy. “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence.”

2. *As a test to the man.* Love cools and men become indifferent. This measure calculated to test the feeling. “If no delight in her, let her go whither she will.”

THE RIGHTS OF PRIMOGENITURE.—*Verses 15-17.*

Moses did not originate these rights, but recognised them, since he found them pre-existing in the general social system of the East. Paternal authority could set aside these rights on just grounds (Gen. xxvii. 33), but is forbidden here to do so from mere partiality.—*Sp. Com.*



**I. The rights of primogeniture defined.** "A double portion of all that he hath." As head of the family, the eldest son would be put into power and privilege, be heir of his father's rank and wealth. He was not to be limited in his allowance, nor deposed from his authority. The Divine Ruler entrusts him with possessions and entails them by his will.

**II. The rights of primogeniture upheld.** Individual preferences and partialities are not to set aside the rights of the firstborn. 1. *Rights upheld through successive marriage.* When an Israelite had two wives together or in succession, one might be loved and the other hated (ver. 15). God might tolerate polygamy, but right must be upheld. 2. *Rights upheld against human partiality.* The influence of the second wife was later and more permanent. Justice must not bend to personal like or dislike. Amid divided affections and divided authority, God and not caprice must rule. 3. *Rights upheld by Divine injunction.* Man is changeable; entails discord, feud and litigation in his family; but God is just and impartial. He will protect our rights and vindicate our character. "He shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born" (ver. 17).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 10-14.** These regulations given 1. as a protest against common crimes in war. 2. As a check to unbridled passion. 3. As a protection to the defenceless. "Compare the Mosaic regulations concerning female slaves with the universal and abominable licentiousness of every heathen nation in their intercourse with slaves. Do not such regulations, at that early period, in an Asiatic nation, bespeak a wisdom and benevolence far superior to a mere human legislator?"—*Graves*.

**Vers. 15-17.** *Mischief of home partiality.* 1. In the family itself—jealousy, strife and confusion. 2. In

the distribution of property. Interest of some consulted to the detriment of others. Bitterness created and parental honour despised. "*The right of the first-born.* 1. Consider the circumstances implied here. The first wife dead; her children living. She is forgotten in a new love. Her children slighted. The second wife living and loved. Her children take the chief place in the father's love. II. Consider the Divine rule. The first-born not to lose their place through their mother's fault, or their father's new affection. Learn—Justice to rule over fatherly caprice. This old law needs often to be remembered."—*Biblical Museum*.

#### THE REBELLIOUS SON.—Verses 18-21.

In former verses parents were urged to be careful of the rights of children; now very suitably children must not forget their duty and withhold their respect from parents. But here is a common case, a sad picture of a rebellious son.

**I. Parental authority defied.** Young persons become wayward and self-willed. Domestic life loses its attraction, home is a prison, and unlawful demands are urged. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Then follow disobedience, rebellion and exile.

**II. Parental authority failing in its purpose.** Parental government is a creation of God and should be upheld with prudence, affection and firmness. Parents err in capricious and tyrannical government. Hence sometimes reaction—the father a fanatic, the son an infidel; the father too severe, the

son immoral and profligate. Children may be spoiled, disheartened and provoked. "My father treats me like a brute," was the saying of a poor bright boy. But children fail in obedience and filial duty, bring dishonour and disgrace to parents. Wild sons become a father's burden and a mother's grief (Prov. x. 1). Home government restrains not, parental discipline fails. Fathers like Howard in the lazaretto at Venice, and David in the palace, exclaims, "Oh, my son, my son!"

**III. Parental authority upheld by the nation.** A wicked son is a peril to society. Rebellion is considered a public crime, not a private wrong. Roman laws were severe against rebellious children; Athenians pronounced worthy of death those who beat their parents or suffered them to want in old age, and in China incorrigible children are delivered up to the magistrates. The law must be honoured and upheld. The State cannot sacrifice its authority and interests to drunkards and criminals.

### ACCURSED OF GOD.—*Verses 22, 23.*

When a criminal was put to death and hanged on a tree, his body was not to remain exposed all night, but buried the same day. He died under the curse of God, and the land was not to be defiled by his exposure.

**I. Hanging a disgraceful punishment.** The body was exposed to insult and assault. Shameful deeds were kept in public memory, and the dead was a spectacle to the world. It was only inflicted on most infamous offenders. Cicero calls it a nameless wickedness. Its pain and disgrace were extreme.

**II. Hanging a defilement of the land.** "That thy land be not defiled." The vices of the living and the bodies of the dead defiled the land (Num. 35, 34). 1. *Physically* it would be defiled. In the hot climate its decomposition would injure the health and peril the life of others. 2. *Morally*, as the land of Jehovah, it would be polluted. Remembrance of crime would harden the heart and breed familiarity. Hence—

**III. Hanging a warning to others.** The punishment was designed to deter others. They *saw* the terrible consequences of guilt. Alas! "hanging is no warning," and men leave the very gibbet or the gallows to commit their crimes.

**IV. Hanging, a type of the death of Christ.** The apostle distinctly refers to this in illustration of the shame and curse of the crucifixion. We were guilty and deserved death. Christ was put to "an open shame," slain, and "hanged on a tree" (Acts v. 35). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made (having become) a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). 1. He became our substitute. 2. He was buried in the evening (Jno. xix. 31). 3. As the land was cleansed by removal of curse, so the conscience and the Church purified by Christ.

### THE ACCURSED TREE.

**I. A shameful death awaits abominable crime.** "Worthy of death" *lit.*, if there be on a man a right of death, "he was hanged upon a tree."

**II. Public ignominy expressed in this shameful death.** Penalty for crime, detestation of the perpetrator and the curse of God.

**III. The desirability of taking away the memory of this shame.** "He shall

not remain all night," take him down from the tree and bury him; blot out his name and remove the curse.

IV. Christ alone removes the curse. The best of men treated as one of the vilest, died the just for the unjust, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 20, 21. *The connection of gluttony and drunkenness.* Both enslave the body, degrade the soul and abuse the gifts of God. "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." (Prov. xxiii. 20, 21). Matthew Henry's note is suggestive "He (impious son) is particularly supposed to be a drunkard or a glutton. This intimates either 1. that his parents did in a particular manner warn him against these sins, and therefore in these instances there was plain evidence he did not obey their voice. Lemuel had this charge from his mother (Prov. xxxi. 4). Note in the education of children, great care should be taken to suppress all inclinations to drunkenness, and to keep them out of the way of temptations to them; in order hereunto they should be possessed betimes with a dread and detestation of these beastly sins, and taught betimes to deny themselves. Or 2.—That being a glutton and a drunkard was the cause of his insolence

and obstinacy to his parents. Note—Nothing draws men into all kind of wickedness and hardens them to it, more certainly and fatally than drunkenness does. When men take to drink they forget the law (Prov. xxxi. 5), even that fundamental law of honouring parents."

Vers. 22, 23. *Hangeth.* 1. The world's judgment. 2. The law's penalty. 3. Christ's treatment. "The law which required this answered all the ends of public justice, exposed the shame and infamy of the conduct, but did not put to torture the feelings of humanity by requiring a *perpetual* exhibition of a human being, a slow prey to the most loathsome process of putrefaction. How excellent are all these laws! How wonderfully well calculated to repress crimes by shewing the enormity of sin! It is worthy of remark, that in the infliction of punishment, prescribed by the Mosaic law, we ever find that *Mercy* walks hand in hand with *Judgment*.—A. Clarke.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1-7. *One slain.*

"Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out: The element of water moistens the earth, But blood mounts upward."—J. Webster.

Vers. 10-14. *Beautiful woman.* In great crises it is woman's special lot to soften our misfortunes.—Napoleon I.

"The artillery of her eye."—A. Cowley.

Ver. 12. *Head.* The hair is one of the finest ornaments women have. Of old, virgins used to wear it loose, except when they were in mourning.—Luther.

Vers. 15-17. *Inherit.* Education is of infinitely more importance to a son than the patrimony of his ancestors, or thousands of gold and silver. The latter is enjoyed in time only; the former goes with him into eternity.—Dr. Davies.

Ver. 18. *Son.*

"Unhappy is the son  
Who to his parents pays no ministry."  
Euripides.

*Stubborn.* I never saw so much essence of devil put into so small a vessel.—Foster.



**Ver. 20. Glutton.** A glutton will defend his food like a hero.—*Napoleon I. Drunkard.* All the crimes on earth do not destroy so many of the human race, nor alienate so much property, as drunkenness.—*Bacon.*

**Ver. 21. Stone him.** The curse pronounced on Mount Ebal against him that setteth light by his father or his mother, still hovers around the rebellious child on his pathway through life, and the character developed by dis-

obedience at home provokes in the world outside assault and revenge, quarrels and death.—*Fred. Perry.*

**Vers. 22, 23. Death.** Justice proportions the smart to the fault; so that we may behold the greatness of the offence in the fitness of the punishment.—*W. Secker.*

"Murder may pass unpunished for a time,  
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime."  
*Dryden.*

## CHAPTER XXII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The cases stated and provided for in vers. 1-12 seem selected by way of example, and belong, according to our notions, rather to ethics than to law. It is noteworthy that no penalty is annexed to the breach of these regulations. No doubt it would be the duty of the "officers" (vers. 16-18) and the elders in the several cities to enforce their observance.—*Speak. Com.*

**Vers. 1-4. Humanity to neighbours.** This is an expansion of Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. A stray sheep, ox or ass to be taken to the owner. If owner unknown or lived at a distance, finder must take it to his own farm until sought for. A fallen ox (ver. 4), unable to carry its burden, to be helped up. *Hide thyself*, excusing or refusing help.

**Ver. 5. Apparel of sex.** *Pertaineth* not only dress, but arms, domestic and other utensils (cf. Ex. xxii. 6; Lev. xi. 32; xiii. 49). This designed to oppose idolatrous practices and to prevent licentious conduct.

**Vers. 6, 7. Birds' nests.** *Chance* often met with by travellers. *Affectionate relation* between parent and young to be sacred. Wisdom and humanity in this precept. *Prolong* (Ex. xx. 12).

**Ver. 8. House building.** Roofs were flat and used for various purposes (Jos. ii. 6; 2 Sam. xii. 2; Acts x. 9.) Human life was not to be endangered through any neglect of protection.

**Vers. 9-12. Mixtures avoided.** Prohibitions against mixing together things which are separated in God's creation, consisting partly of a verbal repetition of Lev. xix. 19. To this is appended in verse 12 the law concerning the tassels upon the hem of the upper garment (Num. xv. 37), which were to remind the Israelites of their calling to walk before the Lord in faithful fulfilment of his commandments.—*Keil.*

**Vers. 13-22. Laws of chastity.** Designed to foster purity and fidelity in relation to the sexes, and to protect females from malice and violence. *Chastise* (ver. 18) with stripes not exceeding forty in number. *Amerce* (F. a at; *merci*, mercy; Lat., *merces*, wages, penalty) punish by pecuniary penalty. *Shekels* paid to the father against whom the slander was made as head of the wife's family. The amount twice as much as that paid by a seducer (ver. 29).

**Vers. 22-30. Laws of marriage.** Adulterers were both to be put to death (ver. 22). *Betrothed* in the city and with her consent (cried not, ver. 24), both stoned. If found in a field (vers. 25-27), and she was forced, the man only died, as the only criminal. *Not betrothed* (ver. 28), a fine for undue liberty and completion of marriage without divorce. Incest (ver. 30) prohibited in repetition of earlier law (cf. Lev. xviii. 8; xx. 11; 1 Cor. v. 1) to form a close.

RESTORATION OF STRAY CATTLE AND LOST GOODS.—*Verses 1-4.*

Moses urges right action in manifold relations of national life, and teaches Israel to regard all arrangements of God as sacred. They were never to cherish any bitterness or hostility towards a neighbour, but restore stray animals and lost goods.

**I. An indication of God's Providence.** "Doth God care for oxen?" Yes; and observes them go astray, or fall beneath their heavy burden. He made and preserves them. He legislates for them, and our treatment of them is reverence or disobedience to His command. "Thou shalt not see," etc.

**II. An opportunity of neighbourly kindness.** "Thy brother" comprehends relatives, neighbours, strangers, and enemies even (Ex. xxiii. 4). The property of any person which is in danger should be protected and restored. Love should rule in all actions, and daily incidents afford the chance of displaying it. In trivial circumstances we may learn to forgive injury, love enemies, and do good for evil. 1. *Kindness regardless of trouble.* "If thy brother be not nigh unto thee, and if thou know him not," seek him out and find him if possible. 2. *Kindness regardless of expense.* If really unable to find the owner, feed and keep it for a time at thine own expense. "Then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it." If such care must be taken for the ox, what great anxiety should we display for the temporal and spiritual welfare of our neighbour himself.

**III. An expression of humanity.** "Thou shalt not hide thyself." Indifference or joy in the misfortune would be cruelty to dumb creatures and a violation of the common rights of humanity. 1. *In restoring the lost.* Cattle easily go astray and wander over the fence and from the fold. If seen they must be brought back and not hidden away. 2. *In helping up the fallen.* The ass illtreated and overladen may fall down through rough or slippery roads. Pity must prompt a helping hand. "Thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." Thus common justice and charity are taught by the law of nature and enforced by the law of Moses. Principles which anticipate the gospel and embody themselves in one of its grandest precepts, "Love your enemies."

INTERCHANGE OF APPAREL.—*Verse 5.*

Not only was property to be held sacred, but the distinction of sexes also, by clothing suitable to each sex. A woman was not to put on a man's clothing, nor a man a woman's. This would be—

**I. A display of indecent conduct.** The putting on of the apparel of the one sex by the other is an outrage of ordinary decency. 1. *In common life.* Unbecoming levity is often seen. Modesty is the guard of female virtue and the charm of social life. 2. *In divine worship.* The custom of changing attire was prevalent in idolatrous worship. The sexes of heathen deities were often confounded and the worshippers endeavoured to please them by attiring like a particular god. This is forbidden to Israel.

**II. A destruction of natural distinction.** God created them male and female. This natural distinction should be preserved in manners and dress; but is destroyed when women forget their sex and men their decorum (1 Cor. ii. 3-9).

**III. An abomination to God.** "All that do so are abomination unto the Lord." The habit defaces the natural image of God in man; opens up the way to impudence, licentiousness and deception. These evils are detestable to God. For man and woman God has given a standard of dress and life.

### TAKE CARE OF BIRDS.—*Verses 6, 7.*

A bird's nest seems a trifling thing to notice, but the majestic and the minute are equally under Divine care. Notice—

**I. The wisdom of the precept.** Birds have important uses in the economy of nature. Extirpation of any species, edible or ravenous, especially in a land like Palestine would be a serious evil. The vulture which destroys putrid bodies and the ibis which devours snakes have been of service to society. The owl keeps down the mice, and sparrows, the caterpillar. God has made nothing in vain. His wisdom and goodness rule over all.

**II. The humanity of the Precept.** To disturb the dam while sitting would rob her of her young and her liberty. It would be wanton destruction and cruelty. The tiniest birds are protected by God. Cowper would make no man his friend who would tread even upon a worm. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

**III. The benefit of the Precept.** Spare the birds and thou shalt prolong thine own days. Kindness to man and beast will elevate personal character, check destructive tendencies, and please God. Those who show mercy shall reap mercy. In all circumstances benevolence to the creature and obedience to the Creator will increase the happiness of life, and meet with the seal of Heaven.

### THE TREATMENT OF BIRD'S NESTS.

**I. The minuteness** of divine law is here very beautifully illustrated. God does not finish great breadths of work and leave the details to be filled by other hands. He who guards planets, guards bird's nests, though in the latter case His defence may be broken down by wanton hands. Our own life to be exact in *detail*. Not enough to keep the law in great aspects which appeal to the public eye, and by keeping which a reputation is sometimes unjustly gained, but by attention to minute and hardly discernable features of character which indicate the real quality of the man. **II. The beneficence** of divine law is illustrated by protection of bird's nests. God kind in little as well as great things. Love is one whether shown in redemption of the race, in numbering hairs of our head, ordering our steps or giving His beloved sleep. All law beneficent; the law of restriction as well as liberty. Man to have dominion over fowls of the air, but dominion to be exercised in mercy. Power uncontrolled by kindness becomes despotism. Power belongs to God—unto God also belongs mercy; this is completeness of dominion, not only a hand to rule, but a heart to love. **III.** A prohibition of this kind shows that there is a right and wrong in *everything*. A right way of appropriating bird's nests and a way equally wrong. Morality goes down to every root and fibre of life. In offering a salutation, opening a door, uttering a wish, writing a letter, in every possible exercise of thought and power. **IV.** The *principle* of the prohibition admits of wide application in life. He who wantonly destroys a bird's nest, may one day cruelly break up a child's home. We cannot stop wantonness when we please. Little tyrannies of childhood explain the great despotisms of mature life.



Kindness an influence that penetrates the whole life, having manifold expression, upward, downward, and laterally, touching all human beings, all inferiors and dependants, and every harmless and defenceless life. V. Beware of the possibility of being merely *pedantic* in feeling. A man may be careful of his horse and cruel to his servant. Some would not on any account break up a bird's nest, yet would allow a poor relation to die of hunger. What with all carefulness for dumb animals, if we think little of breaking a human heart by sternness or neglect! VI. Kindness to the *lower* should become still tenderer to the *higher*. This, Christ's argument in bidding us behold the fowls of the air, that in their life we may see our Father's kindness. "Are ye not much better than they?" If careful for cattle, "How much is a man better than a sheep?" How does the case stand with us, who have completer inheritance of liberty, who have passed from the latter to the *spirit*? We are no longer true, noble and kind, because of literal direction guarded by solemn sanctions, but because the Holy Ghost has sanctified us, and made our hearts his dwelling place.—*Dr. Parker.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1-3. *Lost property restored.***  
An ass, an ox, and raiment samples of the property of an Israelite. If lost these must be restored. 1. To preserve them. 2. To show kindly feeling towards a neighbour. Hence—I. Restoration a duty demanded by a brother and urged by God. II. Neglect to restore a sin. A species of theft, "Thou shalt not steal." The *general duty of stopping stray animals and restoring them to friendly owners* is expressly taught here.

**Ver. 5. *Sex distinguished.*** 1. By nature. 2. By dress. 3. By manners. 4. By conduct. "This is a precept against boldness and effrontery in woman; and against effeminacy in man. It is a precept against all infraction of those laws which God has established at the creation of man and of woman out of man; and renewed and reinforced in the incarnation of Christ. It is a precept against all confusion of attire of men and women, especially in the Church of God."—*Wordsworth*

### ON MAKING BATTLEMENTS.—*Verse 8.*

This is an extraordinary statement. May not a man please himself in building a house which he is able to pay for? God says not, and society in many particulars confirmed the word. There is nothing which a man may do merely to please himself. We are surrounded by other people, and it is one of the most gracious appointments of Providence that we are obliged to consider the effect of our movements upon our fellow-creatures. Thus self will is limited, our character strengthened, and all that is highest in friendship purified and strengthened. It is easy to see how objections to the appointment of the text might arise. For example:—1. "My neighbour will call upon me only now and then; why should I make a permanent arrangement to meet an exceptional circumstance?" We are to build for exceptional circumstances. The average temperature of the year may be mild, wind low and rains gentle; yet we build houses not for such averages, but for the possibility of severe trials. Vessels are not made by the shipbuilder for smooth waters and quiet days, but for the roughest billows and fiercest winds. Our neighbours' visits may be uncertain, yet their very uncertainty constitutes demand for permanent arrangement. Be prepared for crises, expect the unexpected, and be sure of the uncertain. He who is so defended for his neighbour's sake will be equal to the

severest emergencies of life. 2. "But will it not be time enough to build the battlement when anything like danger is in prospect?" No. Life is regulated by the doctrine that prevention is better than cure. We are not at liberty to try first whether people will fall off the roof. Life too short and valuable to justify such experiments. He who prevents the loss of life saves it. Preventive ministries of life are not so heroic and impressive as those of a more affirmative kind, yet they are most acceptable to God. Prevent your boy from becoming a drunkard, it is better than saving him from extremest dissipation, though not so imposing before society. 3. "But ought not men to be able to take care of themselves when walking on the roof of a house without our guarding them as if they were little children?" No. We are to study the interests of the weakest men. This is the principle of Christianity. "If eating flesh or drinking wine," etc. "Him that is weak in the faith receive," etc. "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." The house may be strong, but if wanting the battlement of grace above it, it is wanting in beauty which is pleasant to God's eye. You may be able to walk upon the roof without danger, another may not have the same steadiness of head and firmness of foot. It is for that other man you are to regulate your domestic arrangements. "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

See the Christian application of this. If we are to build a house as not to endanger the men who visit us, are we to build a *life* which may be to others snares of destruction? Is not a battlement around our conduct? Are habits to be formed without reference to social influence? Children are looking at us, strangers take account of our ways, and though we may be proud of our strength, they may be lured from righteousness by that licentiousness which we call liberty.

Has God given directions for building a house and forgotten to give instructions for the building of a *life*? Is it like Him to do the little and forget the great? Is He not more careful about the *tenant* than about the house? Instructions for life-building abound. "Wisdom is the principal thing," etc. Go to the Book with earnest desire to discover the way of salvation, the secret of vital growth, and God will teach.—*The City Temple*. Vol. III.

### RELIGIOUS ÆSTHETICS.—Verses 9-11.

As "a peculiar people" God designed that they should walk worthy of their high vocation. No intermingling allowed with heathen character and practices. They and even their cattle were stamped with the mark of separation. By forbidding the intermingling of seeds, animals and garments, God taught the great lesson of *spiritual separation*. That lesson has been written for our learning.

### THE MIXED SEED.

"*The seed is the word.*" The Christian, faithful in his testimony to divine truth, is the sower. Whatever is opposed to this seed, foreign to it in character, arrests its fall into good ground, or obstructs its growth when rooted—is the mischievous seed of the wicked one—the seed of "tares" and choking "thorns." A teacher of truth in pulpit, Sabbath school, or in house to house visitation who seeks on the Sabbath to scatter the seed of the kingdom, but during the week is busy dealing out "words to no profit," has no more warrant to expect the prepared heart among secular hearers than the husbandman in expecting the culture and preparedness of his ground by the cultivation of chickweed.

## THE UNEQUAL YOKING.

*"Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together."* This illustrates the *intermingling of persons of diverse characters and tastes*. This intercourse is indispensable in certain relations. Men of all characters and orders have fellowship in different ways. It would not be desirable, if practicable, for the "children of light" to be separated outwardly from "the children of this world." Christ moved with crowds but had *fellowship* only with few, contact and intercourse with evil, but no communion with it. He met with men to teach, heal, comfort, and save, but the means He used were words of truth and acts of love. In Christ there were no unseemly and unequal yoking. The illustration refers also to *service*—the inviting of opposite characters and interests in a common cause. The ox being stronger than the ass, two evils ensue. The stronger drags aside the weaker, and the weaker impedes the progress of the stronger. Unequal yokes make bad ploughing and a crooked furrow. The loss is seen in waste of time, labour, and ground. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" In secular life two men united in partnership cannot prosper without agreement. Each seeks his own selfish ends or unrighteous progress at the sacrifice of principle. In spiritual life, when a Christian unites with any whose thoughts, tastes and habits differ from his own, how can they walk harmoniously. Any good to be done is done defectively or left undone. Otherwise it must be done separately; the ox unyoked and freed from encumbrance. The liberation happens in obedience to the Divine injunction, "*Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*"

## THE MIXED GARMENT.

*"Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together."* Many put on religion for particular days and special occasions. On Sabbath they are suitably and religiously attired; but other days of the week find them wearing a garment of coarser material and divers colours. A "linsey-woolsey" christianity is very popular. The practical, outward life of a Christian should harmonise with his spiritual hidden life, compared in Scripture to "fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints." Hence exhortations to "*keep his garments*, to hate the garment spotted by the flesh," to "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man," etc. Christians are a peculiar people in God's estimation, and should be in that of the world by reason of moral character, their spiritual clothing. As "a holy priesthood" they should never put off their long priestly linen garments, but let them be "for glory and beauty." A "*royal priesthood*" should evince its rank by "royal apparel," for they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. What a *motive* does this furnish for practical godliness. The priestly robe should be worn *always*, in all companies and in all times; should suit the home, the sanctuary, and the place of business. Whatever forbids my robe forbids my presence. "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost," and "what agreement hath the temple of God with idols." A *testing principle* is here. The question is not what is lawful for a Christian, but what is seemly, beautiful, and accordant with Divine taste. The God of glory is jealous for the glory of his children. He would have the outward correspond with the inward. "Wherefore be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."—*The Study*, 1875.



THE MORAL AND THE POSITIVE IN THE DUTIES OF LIFE.—*Verse 11.*

On this verse we remark—I. That it exhibits a positive duty. Moral laws are of everlasting obligation; positive may be temporary and local in their existence. II. That as the inculcation of a positive duty, the precept of the text was not so binding upon the Jews as those duties which were wholly moral. III. That we who live under the gospel dispensation are not bound to observe this precept at all. We are not under law, but under grace. IV. That while we are under no manner of obligation to observe this precept in its literal meaning, still the moral principle which underlies that meaning, and which it was intended to illustrate, is as binding now as ever. It teaches us that we cannot “serve two masters;” “thou shalt have no other gods before me.”—*R. Harley, F.R.S.*

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

*Ver. 8. Battlements.* 1. Danger in *places of common resort*. Roofs of houses much resorted to in cool of the evening. 2. Danger in *places of devotion*. They were used as an oratory or places of prayer. 3. Danger in *places of rest*. They were also slept on during the heat of summer. It is needful to have some parapet or fence to guard ourselves and others from falling down.

*Ver. 9. Divers seeds.* 1. To secure the best crop. By enjoining the best, unmixed seed, and by preventing one seed from destroying the other. 2. To forbid heathen customs. Heathens sowed barley with dried grapes, by which they signified that their vineyards were consecrated to Ceres and Bacchus. 3. To induce simple trust in God. By not sowing mixed seeds they would indicate faith in God's providence in seasons wet or dry. “The Church is God's vineyard (Is. v. 7; Jer. xii. 10; Mt. xxi. 33; Lu. xx. 15). It must not be sown with the tares of false doctrine, mingled with the good seed of the word.”—*Wordsworth.*

*Ver. 10. Plow.* Unequally yoked. 1. In the choice of companions. 2. In married life (2 Cor. vi. 14). 3. In Christian work. “The ass is lower than the ox, and when in a yoke together must bear the principal

weight, and that in a very painful position in the neck; his steps are unequal and his strength is inferior, which must occasion an irregular draught, and great oppression to both. The ass is a stubborn, rebellious, and in these countries a spirited creature; the ox, on the contrary, is gentle, tractable, and patient. Accepting this interpretation, it gives us another instance of that humanity which pervades the whole Mosaic code.”—*Cassell.*

*Ver. 11. Garment.* 1. Dress according to your station in life. Linen and wool may have been the apparel of priests and therefore forbidden to the people. 2. Dress not in imitation of the world. The garment may have been peculiar to the heathen priesthood and therefore a virtual condemnation of all idolatrous usages. “These laws were made to set forth how God abhorreth all mixtures in religion, and how carefully men should keep their minds from being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”—*Trapp.*

*Ver. 12. Fringes.* Tassels on the corners of the outer coat, or, according to some, tassels on the coverlet of the bed, which was tied to bed-posts for the sake of decency. Learn—1. Not to be ashamed of your religion however peculiar you may seem to be. Israel distinguished from other people by

these things. 2. Not to forget the precepts of the word. Fringes reminded of particular occasions and precepts. "Speak unto Israel, bid them make fringes . . . . throughout their generations . . . . and it shall be unto them for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remember all the

commandments of the Lord and do them ; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring : that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." (Num. xv. 38-40).

### PURITY AND FIDELITY IN LIFE.—*Verses 13-29.*

The regulations which follow might be imperatively needful in the *then* situation of the Israelites ; and yet it is not necessary that *we* should curiously and impertinently enquire into usages unknown to the language of civilization. So far was it from being unworthy of God to leave such things upon record, that the enactments must heighten our admiration of His wisdom and goodness in the management of a people so perverse and so given to regular passions.—*Jamieson.* We may thus arrange our matter—

I. The slandered wife (vers. 13-19). Chastity and fidelity should characterise married life. "Chastity is the band that holds together the sheaf of all holy affections and duties," says Vinet. This band may be broken and married life be a curse. A husband may question the virtue of his wife from malice or with justice. 1. *Accused maliciously.* He might take her to gratify lusts, then hate her, try to get rid of her, and bring her in bad repute. A declaration of innocence was made by parents before the elders, who were to send for her accuser. He was chastised bodily and forfeited the privilege of divorce. Slander is a crime of the highest nature, a species of murder which destroys reputation and character (Prov. xxv. 18). 2. *Accused justly* (vers. 20, 21). If the words were true and the girl had deceived, was not found to be a virgin, she was to be brought before the door of her father's house and stoned by the men of the city. She had committed fornication in her father's house and folly in Israel (ver. 21). (See Dinah, Gen. xxxiv. 7). Israel was a holy people by profession, and all uncleanness was folly.

II. The unchaste wife. Glancing at the preceding verses, we notice— 1. *Unchaste in marriage* (vers. 20-22). Whoredom was a capital crime, treason to the great king, and punished with severity. 2. *Unchaste after marriage* (ver. 22). Adultery was a sin which could not be tolerated. Adulterers are as hateful as adulteresses (Lev. xx. 10). The man who acts treacherously against "the wife of his covenant" is as great a sinner as the woman who breaks the marriage bond (Mal. ii. 14-16). There is no respect of sexes with God.

III. The seduced virgin. Three cases are given. 1. *Betrothed virgin.* (a) *In the town* (vers. 23-24). Both of them, the man and the girl, were led out to the gate of the town and stoned. The girl because she had not cried for help, therefore consented to the deed ; the man because he had "humbled his neighbour's wife." (b) *In the field* (vers. 25-27). She called for help and could get none, hence not worthy of death. The man alone died. In solitude the enemy assaults, and our cry should be, "Help, Lord !" 2. *Unbetrothed virgin* (vers. 28-29). The man paid the father 50 shekels of silver, married the girl, and could not be divorced from her because he had humbled her. This was to prevent such vicious practices (*cf.* Ex. xx. 16-17.).

DARK SPOTS IN SOCIAL LIFE.— *Verses 13–30.*

These are most delicate matters, but concern the welfare of society and not beneath Divine legislation. “Nor is it a better argument that the Scriptures were not written by inspiration of God to object that this passage, and others of a like nature, tend to corrupt the imagination, and will be abused by evil-disposed readers, than it is to say that the sun was not created by God, because its light *may* be abused by wicked men as an assistant in committing crimes which they have meditated.”—*Horne*.

1. *Slander* (vers. 13–19). The slanderer is most despicable and most dangerous to society. “A false accusation is worse than death” (Eccles. xxvi. 5). Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have fallen by the edge of the tongue (Eccles. xxviii. 18).

“Slander lives upon succession;  
For ever housed where it once gets possession.”—*Shakspeare*.

2. *Adultery* (vers. 20–22). Solomon paints the deadly snare of a strange woman with a master hand and exquisite fidelity (*cf.* Prov. vii. 6–23). The warning is not needless. “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” 3. *Rape* (vers. 25–27). Laws may be too lenient for such violence of women. Surely, if taking away life deserves punishment, this must be the murder of virtue, “a sin worthy of death.” 4. *Fornication* (vers. 28, 29). To gratify lusts, some unrestrained by law human or divine, wound with keenest anguish, commit irreparable injury to body and soul. “But fornication and all uncleanness . . . let it not be once mentioned among you.” 5. *Incest* (v. 30). Abominations like these abounded in Canaan, but must be destroyed in Israel (Deut. xxvii. 20). This is doubly guilty, for she is near of kin, and she is another person’s wife (*cf.* Reuben with Bilhah, Gen. xxxv. 22; Absalom with his father’s wives, 2 Sam. xvi. 20–23; 1 Kings ii. 17). This is a repetition of the law (Lev. xviii. 8; xx. 11). Line upon line, to preserve from sin and purify life. Our own laws might be more severe to check licentiousness and secure social purity.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXII.

**Vers. 1–4. *Ox and ass.*** I am shocked at the thoughtless cruelty of many people, yet I did a thing once that has given me considerable uneasiness, and for which I reproached myself bitterly. As I was riding homeward I saw a waggon standing at a door, with three horses; the two foremost were eating corn from bags at their noses; but the third had dropped his on the ground and could not stoop to get any food. However, I rode on in absence of mind without assisting him. But when I had got nearly home I remembered what I had observed in my absence of mind, and felt extremely hurt at my neglect, and would have ridden back had I not thought the waggoner might have come out of the house and relieved

the horse. A man could not have had a better demand for getting off his horse than for such an act of humanity. It is by absence of mind that we omit many duties.—*R. Cecil*.

**Ver. 5. *Garment.*** A man ought in his clothes to conform something to those that he converses with, to the custom of the nation and the fashion that is decent and general to the occasion and his own condition; for that is best that best suits one’s calling, and the rank we live in.—*Feltham*.

“For the apparel oft proclaims the man.”  
—*Shakspeare*.

**Vers. 6, 7. *Birds.*** Of love need I



say anything? Who is there that has not watched the birds from St. Valentine's day onwards, through their courtships, weddings, lovers' quarrels, house buildings, welcoming of the small strangers, nursing the heirs and heiresses, and sending the young people forth into the world?—*Prof. G. Wilson.*

**Ver. 8. House.** Houses are built to live in and not to look on; therefore let use be preferred before uniformity, except where both may be had.—*Bacon.*

### Ver. 9, 10. Seeds. Humanity

Is not a field where tares and thorns alone  
Are left to spring; good seed hath there been  
sown

With no inspiring hand. Sometimes the shoot  
Is choked with weeds, or withers on a stone;  
But in a kindly soil it strikes its root  
And flourisheth and bringeth forth abundant  
fruit.

—*Dr. Southey.*

**Vers. 13-19. Occasions of speech.** Slander is a vice impure in its source, dangerous in its effects, and sometimes irreparable in its consequences. It generally strikes three mortal blows—it wounds him who commits it, him

against whom it is committed, and him who knows that it is committed. It is tolerated in society only because almost every one has an unhappy inclination to commit it.—*Saurin.*

"To speak no slander; no, nor listen to it."—*Tennyson.*

**Vers. 20-30. Virgin.** Agesilaus, king of Sparta, was a great lover of chastity. In his journeys he would never lodge in private houses where he might have the company of women; but ever lodged either in the temples or in the open fields, making all men witnesses of his modesty and chastity.

**Vers. 25-27. Rape.** The Lacedæmonian commonwealth was utterly ruined by a rape committed on the two daughters of Scedasus and Leuctra (*Trapp*). Publius Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for succour to preserve her chastity. He being but 24 years old, and in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not suffer her to come into sight, for fear of falling into temptation himself, and, therefore, restored her safely to her father. Admirable example!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—From the sanctification of domestic relations, to which laws of marriage and chastity in the previous chapter pointed, Moses now proceeds to legislate for the purity of the congregation and the camp.

**1-8. Rights of Citizenship in Israel.** Forbidden to the mutilated in his sexual member (ver. 1). Mutilation practised among Gentiles, but unnatural in those made in God's image and chosen to be God's people (Lev. xxii. 24). Bastard (ver. 2). Offspring of incest and adultery, *gen.*—collective bodies of contemporaries (*cf.* Gen. xv. 16; Ex. i. 6); *tenth* complete number used in highest sense, and signifies an indefinite period. Ammonites and Moabites excluded. Perhaps reference to their incestuous origin (Gen. xix. 30-38). But they both combined against Israel without provocation; hired Balaam to curse, and brought upon themselves perpetual rejection (*cf.* Num. xxiv. 9; xxii. 5, 6). Seek (ver. 6). Invite them to friendship, nor care for their welfare (Ezra ix. 12; Jer. xxix. 7). Edomites and Egyptians had opposed (Num. xx. 18; Ex. xx. 5), but Israel were to be friendly with them and not forget former hospitality. *Third gen.* (ver. 8), *i.e.* the great grandchildren who had lived strangers in Israel might be incorporated.

**9-14. Purity of the camp must be preserved in war.** Wicked thing states in vers. 10-13 uncleanness of body; theft, violence, and sins common to life in camps (Jos. vi. 10, 18). Then

follow sanitary regulations to secure cleanliness of person and habits. The necessities of nature provided for outside the camp (vers. 12, 13). Walk. Fit for God's presence. Unclean thing. "Nakedness of anything"—nothing to be ashamed of; no want of reverence in not removing evil must be displayed.

15-18. Toleration and non-toleration. A slave running away from the tyranny of his master, not to be given up, but to dwell in the land (vers. 15-16). Prostitutes, male and female, descended from Israel not to be tolerated, *i.e.*, not allowed to give themselves up to prostitution as religious worship (vers. 17-18). *Dog* is figurative (*cf.* Rev. 22-15) and equivalent to the "Sodomite" of the verse preceding (*cf.* Mic. i. 7; Baruch vi. 43). *Speak. Com.*

19-25. Theocratic rights of citizenship. Of a brother (*i.e.*, countryman) an Israelite was not to take interest for money, food, or any goods lent to him. *Stranger*, not Israelites (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv., 36, 37). Vows fulfilled without delay (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 29; Num. xxx. 2; Ecc. v. 4, 5.) For general law of vows (*cf.* Lev. xxvii). Hunger might be satisfied in vineyards and cornfields of a neighbour, but nothing to be carried away in a vessel. Pluck (ver. 25 *cf.* Matt. xii. 1; Luke vi. 1). Right to pluck still recognised among Arabs.

### EXCLUDED FROM THE CONGREGATION.—Verses 1-5.

Everyone belonging to God's people or devoted to God's service should be as perfect as possible. "Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God" (Lev. xxi. 16-21). Five classes are mentioned as unfit to enter the congregation of the Lord.

I. Mutilated persons are excluded (ver. 1). Two kinds are specified. 1. *Eunuchs*. An ancient practice for priests of many heathen gods, especially of the Syrian goddess, to be eunuchs, and for parents in various ways to mutilate their children and train them for the service of the great. God's service requires soundness and purity. Sacrifices must be free from defect and blemish. Individuals in whom the Divine image was wilfully defaced were not qualified for office and association with God's people. 2. *Bastards*. Such spring from an order not natural and divine. Whether heathens or strangers, often styled harlots (Is. xxiii. 17, 18); or born before wedlock a stigma is attached to discourage disgraceful habits. These prohibitions literally and symbolically were suited for the Jewish Church—had reference only to its outward constitution, and passed away when the kingdom of God was established.

II. Special nations are excluded (ver 3). Ammon and Moab were for ever excluded. 1. *They neglected duty*. As allies or neighbouring states they brought no victuals into the camp, for which Israel would have paid them. 2. *They were hostile in proceedings*. Without provocation they opposed Israel and hired Balaam to curse them. The unmerciful will be excluded from the kingdom (Mat. xxi. 41-46). There can never be any "peace" or "prosperity" to enemies of God. A curse falls upon all who injure God's people, and they will forfeit His favour for ever. Balaam had to confess, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. xxiv. 9).

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. 1. The privilege of intercourse with God and His people. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee." 2. The purity required for enjoyment of this privilege. The wrath

of man is made to praise God (Ps. xxxvi. 10.) All that are sinful and impure are excluded from heaven. There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth (Rev. xxi. 27).

Ver. 4. *Neglect.* Its guilt and danger.

Vers. 4-6. *Benevolence towards God's ancient people.* I. The duty of benevolence is general. 1. It is a duty. 2. It is a duty absolutely indispensable to our acceptance with God. II. Our special obligation to exercise it towards God's ancient people. 1. We are more indebted to them than to any other people under heaven. 2. The very blessings which we enjoy were taken from them that they might be transferred to us. 3. This very transfer of their blessings has been made to us for the express purpose that He might dispense them to that bereaved people in the hour of

their necessity. III. The more particular obligations which we have to exercise towards them at this time. Observe—1. The interest now felt in the Christian world for their restoration to God. 2. The stir which prevails among the Jews themselves. 3. The earnest which God has given us in the actual commission of some. 4. The general voice of prophecy.—

C. Simeon, M.A.

Ver. 6. As God takes notice of the least courtesy showed to His people, even to a cup of water, to requite it, so He doth of the least discourtesy, even to a frown or a frump, to revenge it.—*Trapp.*

#### THE CURSE TURNED INTO A BLESSING.—*Verse 5.*

A divine law governs events which can never be changed. God can "curse the blessings of the wicked" (Mal. ii. 2), or turn their curse into blessings as here. Apply to other things—

1. *In persecution.* Often overruled for the triumph of God's people and the spread of God's cause. "The more I seek to blot out the name of Christ, the more legible it becomes; and whatever of Christ I thought to eradicate takes deeper root, and rises the higher in the hearts and lives of men.—*Diocletian.*" 2. *In labour.* What this would have been without sin we know not. The ground is "cursed" and we toil in the "sweat of the face" (Gen. iii. 17-19.) But the curse is blessed to physical health in the vigour and development of the body, to intellectual enjoyment, in the rest and recreation of mind, to the good of society, by promoting its interests and satisfying its wants. "Labour is the salt of life." 3. *In affliction,* which checks sin, weans from the world, brings to God, prepares and disciplines for future life. As fire refines gold, so affliction purifies men. Many can say, "chastisements are blessings in disguise; it is good for me that I have been afflicted." 4. *In sin.* This greatest curse, which brought death into both worlds, is made the occasion of the greatest blessing. God, in his infinite wisdom, redeems from sin and death; in Jesus Christ displays His love and magnifies His grace in the salvation of the sinner. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

#### THE EDMITE AND THE EGYPTIAN.—*Verses 7-8.*

Edomites refused permission for Israel to pass through the land, yet they were related to them by kindred, and must not be abhorred. "He is thy brother." In Egypt Israel were oppressed, yet in that land they had received benefits, and descendants in the third generation of both peoples might be naturalised. Learn—

I. That the tie of kindred must be respected. God has bound men in different social ties, and such ties should ever be held most sacred. "If there



be not a religious element in the relations of men," says Carlyle, "such relations are miserable and doomed to ruin." 1. *In the family.* Husbands and wives, sisters and brothers must love another. 2. *In the neighbourhood* he must feel the claims of others. Nothing can destroy this relationship. "There is a law of neighbourhood which does not leave a man perfectly master on his own ground."—*Burke*. 3. *In the country.* Our native country makes its impress on our character as its accent on our tongue. We must love and pray for our country.

II. That hospitality must not be forgotten. Israel had found a home in Egypt and received many gifts in coming out. Edom was not very friendly, but they had furnished Israel with victuals in their march. For these things they must be rewarded. 1. *Time must not obliterate remembrance of kindness.* Years had passed, but Israel must not forget their obligation. Gratitude must prompt generosity for special favours. "One good turn deserves another." 2. *Circumstances must not obliterate remembrance of kindness.* Israel had grown more prosperous and more powerful, but they were forbidden to revenge or "pay back an old grudge." No changes of time or place must alter disposition to do right. Our ill treatment in the past must "provoke to love," not to rancour, resentment and wrath. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good."

The shade by which my life was crossed,  
Which makes a desert in the mind,  
Has made me kindly with my kind.

—Tennyson.

### THE SANCTITY OF THE CAMP.—Verses 9-14.

Sanitary rules of great importance are given here. Simple, well adapted to the climate, and enforced by the highest motives.

I. Cleanliness must be enforced. This part of the ceremonial law was constantly enforced. In private and in public it is a religious duty; in war or in the camp special evils result from its neglect. "In thy filthiness is lewdness" (Ezek. xxiv. 13).

II. Wickedness must be avoided. "Keep thee from every wicked thing." Theft and violence are incident to camp life. Morals and religion are often relaxed in time of war. Outward cleanliness was only symbolic of that holiness for which God was training His people. "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

III. Purity is essential to success. "To deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee" (ver. 14). Sin paralyses, frustrates and hinders all effort. In spiritual warfare, conquests are won by prayer and purity. Holiness is invincible "when the host goeth forth against the enemy."

### GOD'S PRESENCE AN ARGUMENT FOR MORAL PURITY.—Verses 12-14.

If the presence of some earthly prince would put us on our guard and make us careful not to offend, how earnest should we be to put away every "unclean thing" when "God walketh in the midst of the camp."

I. In daily life. Outwardly "wash and be clean" in person and habits; inwardly in heart, character and conduct. "Outward cleanliness is inward purity," says the Talmud.

II. In the domestic circle. This was no mere typical cleanliness, but such as pertained to the person and dwelling of every Israelite, and which the Creator's laws of health require from all classes and ranks. It is a part of the system of the God of law, order and beauty. Dirty homes are repulsive and unhealthy—injurious to morals and social life. "Cleanse your persons and dwellings, else I shall never believe that you have cleansed your souls," said John Wesley.

III. In the Christian Church. God is specially in "the camp" of believers to work for deliverance and progress. The standard of piety must not be lowered. Every soldier must be holy and consistent, and the interests of the church constantly guarded. The Great King demands a clean camp and a purified army, that he may dwell there. "Thy camp shall be holy, that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 9. *Keep thee.* Walk accurately, as carrying thy life in thy hand; for "the sword devoureth one as well as another" (2 Sam. ii. 25); it spares neither lord nor losel. Every soldier, therefore, should be a saint, ready pressed to meet the Lord, Who hath said, "I will be sanctified in all them that draw near unto Me" (Lev. x. 3).—*Trapp.*

*The soldier's bearing.* 1. The nature of this injunction. The true soldier of Israel to be honourable, self-controlled, chivalrous. 2. The reason of it. That Israel might be respected for character as well as courage. That by their virtues and successes God, their Lawgiver, might be honoured. 3. The application of it. Character of soldiers of Christ. Right methods for lawful ends.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 13. *Unclean thing.* The charge to be clean. 1. From moral pollution (ver 9). 2. From ceremonial pollution. 3. From natural pollution (vers. 12-14).—*Mt. Henry.* Hereby God taught His people holy conversation, that they should keep themselves from iniquity as David did (Psa. xviii. 23)—that is, from such sins as either by their constitution, calling, company or custom, they are most prone to.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 14. *Conditions of victory.* 1. Purity of character. 2. The presence of God. 3. Rectitude of purpose. Then the enemy will be like the Egyptians. "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them" (Ex. xiv. 25).

#### SPECIAL LAWS.—Verses 15-18.

Israel were to be a terror to tyrants, a refuge for afflicted people and a representative of God. They were to protect the oppressed, but to sanction no whoredom.

I. Fugitive slaves were allowed asylum. The reference is not to idolaters, but to slaves who fled from a foreign country and from harsh treatment from an unjust master. 1. *They were protected from oppression.* "Thou shalt not deliver him unto his master." In Greece and Rome slaves were pursued by their masters, and if caught were branded with a red-hot iron. But a refugee was free, as in Britain now, the moment he sets his foot upon the soil. *They*

were permitted to settle at pleasure. Not merely protected but encouraged to reside where it was best for him, or where he might choose. Lawless power must be checked. The interests of men must be felt when their fortunes are committed to our care.

**II. Prostitutes were prohibited from their calling.** Males and females were devoted to the service of Ashtaroth, visited cities, wandered as mendicants in country villages and enticed the people to abominable crimes. 1. *Persons were forbidden to profess.* "There shall be no whore (sodomitess) of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel," attaches to the worship of God and reproaches to the people of God. 2. *Their sinful gains were rejected at the altar.* The profits of prostitution must not be given into the treasury. They were scandalous hire, the price of a dog, an "abomination to the Lord," and must not be "brought into the house of the Lord." We cannot honour God with our substance unless secured by righteous means." God not only looks at what we give, but how we got it." "I hate robbery for burnt-offering."

"He will be found impartially severe,  
Too just to wink, or speak the guilty clear."  
—Cowper.

### CIVIL RIGHTS.—Verses 19–25.

Here is not only a plea for liberty and a check to lewdness, but a law of usury and of vows, and a right to appease hunger.

**I. A right to borrow without interest.** From a *stranger* interest might be allowed. Commerce must be carried on and capital invested. It is a legal act, and often a mutual benefit, to borrow and pay favour for the loan. But from an *Israelite* no interest must be taken. Kindly feeling must be cherished. "He is thy brother" (verse 20.) They might lend money, seed, or food among themselves; but covetousness be checked, separation from other nations must be preserved, and God must be acknowledged. "That the Lord thy God may bless thee."

**II. A right of discretion in making a vow.** None were compelled to vow. "If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee." But having made a vow, it must be faithfully performed. "Thou shalt not slack to pay it." It is sacred in character, binding in force, and ought always to be made with timely caution (Num. xxx. 2). "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecc. v. 5).

**III. A right to refresh themselves in cornfields or vineyards.** Labourers in the vintage, or travellers in the cornfield, had an interest in the fruit of the land. 1. *Hunger might be appeased.* Provision was thus made for the poor. Nature's products are given to satisfy human wants. Jewish "poor laws" permitted neighbours to pluck the fruit of the proprietor's fields. "Thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand" (ver. 25). 2. *Dishonesty must not be practised.* The sickle must not be put into the standing corn, nor a grape carried away in a vessel. "Thou mayest take for necessity, not for superfluity," says Trapp. Kindness must not be abused. We must not censure men, nor insist upon compensation for trifles. Be generous. Remember "the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour towards man" (Tit. iii. 4).



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 17, 18. Dedication of unholy gains.** Many public prostitutes dedicated to their gods a part of their impure earnings, or were kept in the temple to support abominable worship. Such offerings—1. *A reproach to their dignity.* They were Israelites, the people of God. "No such thing ought to be done in Israel." 2. *An offence to their God.* Holiness becomes the house of worship of God. The wages of licentiousness pollute the altar. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 8, 21, 27).

**Vers. 19, 20. Usury.** 1. Lend cheerfully, without extortion or oppression. 2. Lend with a view to please God, whose favour will rest upon them in domestic, social and national life. "That the Lord thy God may bless

thee in all thou settest thine hand to in the land" (ver. 20).

**Vers. 21-23. Vows.** 1. Rule in making them. *a.* Voluntary. A self imposed obligation. *b.* Cautiously. "Be not rash with thy mouth, to cause thy flesh to sin" (Ecc. v. 6). 2. Rule in paying them. *a.* Instantly. As the best proof of sincerity. "Defer not to pay it." *b.* Cheerfully. "God loveth a cheerful giver." That which is gone out of the lips cannot be recalled, but performed solemnly, punctually, and fully.

**Vers. 24, 25. Varied Rights.** 1. The rights of travellers to eat. 2. The rights of property which must not be infringed. 3. The rights of God to claim possessions and legislate for their use. "The world is mine and the fulness thereof."

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIII.

**Vers. 1-6. Defects.** Deplorable is the degradation of our nature.—*South.*

"Trust not yourself; but, your defects to know,  
Make use of every friend and every foe."—*Pope.*

**Ver. 5. Curse.** Human curses are oftentimes more an honour than a disgrace.—*Dr. Thomas.*

**Vers. 7, 8. Not abhor.** Let former kindnesses be remembered, and past injuries be forgotten.—*Wordsworth.*

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being merciful:  
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge."—*Shakespeare.*

**Vers. 10-14. Clean.** I have more than once expressed my conviction—that the humanizing influence of habits of cleanliness has never been sufficiently acted on. A clean, fresh, and well-ordered house exercises a moral, no less than a physical influence. Nor is it difficult to trace a connection

between cleanliness and the formation of habits of respect for property, for the laws in general, and even for those higher duties and obligations the observance of which no laws can enforce.—*Dr. S. Smith.*

**Vers. 15, 16. Servant.** St. Baron, before his conversion to Christianity, caused one of his slaves to be severely beaten and then sold. After his conversion, he could not rest till he had induced this slave to cause his imprisonment, where he deplored constantly his crime against his human and Christian brother.—*Ill. Paul and Onesimus.*

**Vers. 17, 18. Price.** Religious profession was, at first, a conflict—a sacrifice: now it is become a trade.—*R. Cecil.*

"Look to thy actions well:  
For churches either are our heaven or hell."—*G. Herbert.*

**Vers. 19, 20. Usury.** Commerce

flourishes by circumstances, precarious, contingent, transitory, almost as liable to change as the winds and waves that waft it to our shores.—*Cotton*.

Vers. 21-23. *Vows*. When you have promised to do any good office, the right of the thing promised hath, before the God of Truth, passed over from you to another; consequently, you will esteem yourself obliged to stand to the performance of your word, though it may be to your own prejudice.—*Venn*.

Vers. 24, 25.—A lady on her journey in India rested on her palanquin beneath the shade of some banyan trees, while her bearers kindled a fire, and her servant began his cooking preparations. Close by was a garden of gourds and other Indian vegetables, and the lady was surprised to see her servant coolly walk into this garden, gather first one kind of vegetable after another, till his

hands were full, when he went to the fire and began cutting them up. His mistress called him, told him not to forget to pay for all he had taken, for the owners would come and water the plants. The man smiled and said they would not require payment. The lady tried to explain that it was stealing to take away the property of another without paying for it. He smiled again and with truthful expression replied in broken English, "That no stealing, ma'am; that one custom in my country. Travelling this way take what we want, but no carry away." The owners of the garden soon afterwards appeared, the servant told them in his native tongue, how his mistress accused him of stealing, on which they were all amused. This had evidently been the habit of their country from time immemorial, and they had no desire to change, but were contented to do as their fathers had done before them.—*Biblical Treasury*.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—In this chapter certain duties social and domestic are chosen to illustrate the general application of the law.

1-5. *Relation of man and wife. Divorce*. The verses are hypothetical and should form one sentence, the first three being protasis and ver. 4 the apodosis. Moses neither institutes nor commands divorce, but permits, puts under careful regulations which was too prevalent, too deeply rooted to abolish. The passage harmonises with Mat. v. 31, 32; xix. 3-9. *Favour*. Does not please him. *Unclean*. Nakedness, disgrace or shame (1 Sam. xx. 30; Is. xx. 4). *Bill, i.e.*, writing of cuttings, a certificate of separation, from the man with whom the wife was one flesh (Gen. ii. 24). The first husband could not take his divorced wife back again; she was *defiled* (ver. 4) by marriage with a second husband. This moral defilement not removed by divorce from the second husband even after his death; but *abomination* a stain upon the land, as much as incest and licentiousness (Lev. xviii. 25).

A precept, similar to that in Ex. xxii. 25, 26.

6-9. *Various prohibitions*. *Upper stone* is concave and covers the *nether* like a lid-law, prohibited either from being taken; for then the hand-mill would be injured and life endangered.

7. Repetition of law against man-stealing (Ex. xxi. 16).

8, 9. *Plague* (Lev. 13, 14). Leprosy was the symbol of sin, most often the theocratic punishment, the penalty for sins committed against the theocracy, as in the cases of Miriam. Gehazi and Uzziah.—(*Abp. Trench.*)

10-13. *Warnings against oppression*. In loans they must not compel the borrower to give a pledge that was really necessary for him. If a poor man pledged his cloak it was restored before night. In East, poor generally have only their daily garments to cover them at night, (*cf.* Ex. xxii. 25, 26).

16-18. Warning against injustice. Hired servants, paid at close of day ; to withhold wages for a night would entail suffering and be *sin*, injustice.

15. Cf. Lev. xiv. 13, and Jas. v. 4.

16. Caution addressed to earthly judges. God, as Sovereign Judge of all nations might visit the sins of parents upon children (Ex. xx. 5). In heathen nations whole families were involved in the penalty of the parent and were put to death together ; in Israel it must not be thus (cf. 2 Kings xiv. 6 ; Jer. xxxi. 29, 30).

17. Pervert. Law against perverting right of strangers, widows and orphans repeated from (Ex. xxii. 20, 21 ; xxiii. 9) ; with addition not to take a widow's pledge, for they were once strangers and bondmen in Egypt (Lev. xix. 33).

19-22. Portion of the friendless. No injustice done to the poor, but they must be helped out of abundance ; by a forgotten sheaf in the harvest field (ver. 19) ; by the fruit of the olive tree (ver. 20) ; and by gleanings from the vintage (ver. 21). In ver. 22 the reason is given, as in ver. 18 and chap. xv. 15.

### THE SANCTITY OF THE MARRIAGE BOND.—Verses 1-5.

The relation between man and wife here set forth is one that is sacred and binding.

**I. One which must not be broken by frivolous pretexts.** The original institution sets forth the perpetuity of the bond (Gen. ii. 24). Divorce for a time may be tolerated, but it contravenes the order of nature and of God. No whims, no words, no slander (Ep. xxii. 13-19), no seduction before marriage (xxii. 28-29), must lead to separation. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

**II. One which must be strengthened by every possible method.** Instead of frivolous rupture there should be constant endearment. The claims of married life rise above the exigencies of military service, and can only be severed by death. "He shall not go out to war" (ver. 5). Domestic duties must not be sacrificed to public engagements. "Neither shall he be charged with any business." Home must be guarded and the wife loved. "Be free at home and cheer up his wife."

### THE LAW OF DIVORCE.—Verses 1-4.

This permissive law of divorce was one of those "statutes" given to the Israelites that were not good (Ezek. xx. 25)—*i.e.*, not *absolutely*, but only *relatively* good ; not the universal and perpetual law, but a provisional enactment suited to the demoralized state and peculiar circumstances of the Hebrew people (Rom. v. 20 ; Gal. iii. 19). They were allowed to divorce their wives without the assignation of any cause ; but it was accompanied under the law with three conditions which were calculated greatly to prevent the evils incident to the permitted system, viz.—1st. That the act of divorcement was to be certified on a written document, the preparation of which with legal formality, probably by a Levite, who might admonish and counsel the parties, would afford time for reflection and repentance, as well as impart a solemn and deliberate character to the transaction. 2nd. That it was "given in (into) her hand," either privately or publicly. When delivered privately, it was stamped with the husband's seal, and handed to the repudiated wife in presence of her witnesses ; but when done publicly it was accompanied with increased formalities, and frequently taken to the Sanhedrim, to be there deposited in their archives for preservation. 3rd. That in the event of the divorced wife being married to



another husband, she could not on the termination of the second marriage be restored to her first husband, however desirous he might be to receive her. In the circumstances of the Israelitish people this law of divorce was of great use in preserving public morals, and promoting the comfort and permanence of married life.—*Jamieson's Com.*

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1-4.** *Christ's toleration of divorce.* Viewing these words in relation to Matt. xix. 1-12, we learn—

1. *That this was concessive legislation;* a deviation from the eternal standard of right, not a change of law—moral, like natural law, is unchangeable. Moses suffered them, “but from the beginning it was not so.” 2. *That it was conceded on account of their “hardness of heart.”* They had fallen into that condition in which obedience to the higher law was impossible. The least of two evils was chosen. But for divorce the woman might have been the victim of tyranny, rigour and death. But while permitting divorce, Moses restricts it.

*Checks upon divorce.* He enacts (1) that divorce must not take place as hitherto at the arbitrary will and pleasure of the husband, and by mere word of mouth, but by reason given,

and by means of a written and formal document. This legal document would require time and the intervention of public authority to attest sufficiency and due execution. This delay would give opportunity for reconsideration, interposition of magistrates to admonish and prevent frivolous complaints. (2) *That the divorced wife who had married a second time shall never return to her first husband.* This would admonish the parties that divorce once consummated would be irreparable and ought not therefore to be brought about rashly and lightly.—(*Speak. Com.*)

**Vers. 1-5.** *The rights of woman.*

1. *To legal divorce when justified.*  
2. *To be treated with due respect at home.* Other systems degrade, but this exalts woman.

THE SACREDNESS of HUMAN LIFE.—*Verses 6, 7, and 10-12.*

In these prohibitions we see the sacredness of life in its various conditions and changes.

**I.** *The implements by which life is sustained must not be taken.* The millstone was the only means of grinding corn for daily sustenance. To take any part would hinder work, prevent the payment of debt, and injure “a man’s life.” Tools are needful to trade; beds, clothing, and cooking utensils to the comforts of life. We must work with our hands the thing that is good that we may “have to give to him that needeth” (Ep. iv. 28).

**II.** *The freedom by which life is enjoyed must be respected.* To steal or sell a man was a capital offence, “That thief shall die.” Kidnapping deprives of liberty that gives life its chief value. Many would prefer death to slavery. To be made a slave would be a calamity most terrible, and when this results from kidnapping it is the most crushing of all misfortunes. Joseph was sold. Egyptian and classic history, American slavery, and African serfdom tell of bloody scenes enacted for purposes of man stealing. The law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ were greatly needed to check the atrocious crime. “He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death” (Ex. xxi. 16).

**III. The House in which life is spent must not be invaded.** The pledge must not be fetched out of the house. The owner must bring it to the door. "An Englishman's house is his castle." The home of the poor must be as safe as the mansion of the rich; the hut of the serf as sacred as the palace of the prince. Thank God for the security and sanctity of home!

What can be sweeter than our native home!  
Thither for ease and soft repose He come;  
Home is the sacred refuge of our life.—*Dryden*.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST.—*Verses 8, 9.*

No house was to be visited by a lender, but in case of leprosy the priest might enter and examine it. Home was to be inviolable except when public security demanded exposure. Hence special warning is given to avoid any sin which might bring the plague. Miriam's case is prominently set forth. Learn—

**I. The past history records interventions of God.** God is in our own history—in the history of all nations, but especially in Jewish history. Under the Theocracy are remarkable instances of sins and punishments.

**II. These interventions of God should be remembered by us.** Israel were to remember "what the Lord God did" in Egypt and "by the way" to Canaan. "Memory is the conservative faculty," says Sir W. Hamilton. It preserves from oblivion events of importance, and puts them again before our eyes. "Remember Lot's wife." "Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam."

**III. Obedience to this rule will convert past history into help for the future.** The future lies before us; the past is the period of facts, pleasing or painful. It is the storehouse of instruction and encouragement. "Things which are written in Scripture and in history are written "for our learning." Sin brings punishment, and obedience God's favour. Let us avoid the one and secure the other. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples (types, figures), and they are written for our admonition (warning)" (1 Cor. x. 11).

#### PROTECTION FOR THE UNFORTUNATE.—*Verses 10-17.*

In these words we have warnings against injustice and oppression of the poor—

**I. The poor must not be compelled to lend unlawful pledges.** "The borrower is servant to the lender," and may be forced to servile bondage. Man thus becomes an alien to his brother, and often the victim of gratification—not the object of sympathy. The widow's raiment was not to be taken (verse 17). The borrower was not to be compelled to give up any pledge needful for life and comfort. This would check strife, save from mendicancy, and urge generosity.

**II. The condition of the poor must not be needlessly exposed.** The lender was not to go into the house of the borrower (verse 10). He must spare his neighbour's feelings, and not require exposure of his home or declaration of insolvency. The creditor must not be insolent, but mitigate severity and preserve good feeling. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

**III. The wages of the poor must not be withheld.** "Thou shalt give him his hire" (verse 16). He sets his heart, has special desire for it, and his distress should urge its due payment. To withhold it for a night would be injustice,

and inflict great suffering. This humane law was highly esteemed in after times. "He who treats a hireling with harshness sins as grievously as if he had taken away life, and transgresses five precepts." It is robbery and a special sin against God. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning (Lev. xix. 13).

IV. The poor must not be deprived of justice (ver. 17). The repetition of this law indicates the strong tendency of the Jewish people to oppress and illuse strangers and the desire of the Moses to check it. They must not upbraid the stranger for his nationality nor remind him of his former idolatry. Their own bitter experience should remind them of this inhumanity. "Thou wast a bondman in Egypt." Our own humiliation should soften our hearts towards others and teach us that the security of society depends upon the equal rights of all its ranks.

### IMPORTANT RECOLLECTION.—Verse 18.

The admonition may seem needless, but we are prone to forget God's works and wonders. We have need to be stirred up to remembrance for four purposes. *First, for the purpose of humility.* We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. With the lowly is wisdom. If wise, we were once foolish; if justified, we were once condemned; if sons of God, we were once servants of sin. Look to the rock from whence hewn. *Second, for the purpose of gratitude.* If affected by kindness from our fellow creatures, should we overlook our infinite Benefactor. We have no claims upon Him and should be thankful for all His benefits. But *herein* is love. Blessed be the God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people. *Thirdly, for the purpose of confidence.* David argued from the past to the future. Because thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. Here we have peculiar reason for encouragement. What were we when He first took knowledge of us? Was the want of worthiness a bar to His goodness then? Will it be so now? Is there variableness or shadow of turning with Him? Is there not the same power in His arm and the same love in His heart? Did He pardon me when a rebel, and will He cast me off now that He has made me a friend? "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," etc. *Fourthly, for the purpose of pity and zeal.* How many round about you in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity ready to perish? You know the state they are in, and the blessedness of deliverance from it. You are witnesses what God is able and willing to do. Invite the prisoners of hope to turn to Him—you can speak from experience.—*Jay.*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 8, 9. *The Plague of Leprosy.*  
1. Miriam's sin. 2. Miriam's punishment. 3. Miriam a warning to others. "Take heed."

Vers. 10–15. *Social Laws.* Law is the bond of social morality. 1. Laws of lending and borrowing. 2. Laws of social intercourse. Regard the circumstances and the homes of the poor.

3. Laws of labour. Hiring—prompt and frequent payment of labourer's wage.

Ver. 15. *Setteth his heart.* How exceedingly natural is this! The poor servant who seldom sees money, yet finds from his master's affluence that it procures all the conveniences and comforts of life, longs for the time



when he shall receive his wages. Should his pay be delayed after the time is expired, he may naturally be expected to cry unto God against him who withholds it.—*A. Clarke.*

"*Lest he cry.*" A crying sin (*cf.* Jas. v. 3), condemned by the very light of nature. Plato would have him double paid that is not paid in due time.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 17, 18. Three classes mentioned as liable to oppression. 1. *The stranger*; seldom protected by any legislation, unless they had become permanent residents. 2. *The fatherless*. 3. *The widow*. The right of widows and orphans were protected generally by civilised communities. But protection is often insufficient, therefore the command of God and the legal penalty certain to fall on those

who offend. "Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor," etc. (Zech. 7, 9).

Ver. 18. *Remember*. Most people who have affluence, rose from comparative penury; for those who are born to estates frequently squander them away; such therefore should remember what *their* feelings, their fears, and anxieties were when they were poor and abject. A want of attention to this most wholesome precept, is the reason why pride and arrogance are the general characteristics of those who have risen in the world from poverty to affluence, and it is the conduct of those men which gave rise to the rugged proverb, "Set a beggar on horseback, and he'll ride to the devil."—*A. Clarke.*

#### HARVEST LAWS.—Verses 19–21.

In these words we have the earliest poor law that we read of in the code of any people, uniting the obligation of public duty with private benevolence.

I. God has special regard for the poor. The stranger, the fatherless, and the widow were defended by special providence. "The Lord's poor are the Lord's care." The Mosaic law is full of tender provisions for them. To neglect, despise or reproach them is to mock God himself. "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker" (Prov. xvii. 5).

II. God demands that our charity should be constantly exercised towards the poor. "The poor ye have always with you" to remind us of dependence upon God; to beget kindly feeling and cultivate constant charity. 1. *He gives substance for charity*. The harvest, the olive tree, and the vine, the fruits of the farm, and the results of labour and skill are His gifts. "What comes from God's bounty should be laid out to God's glory." "Honour the Lord with thy substance," etc. (Prov. iii. 9). 2. *He gives seasons for charity*—seed time and autumn—seasons of trial and want. Our bounties are never amiss—never out of season. "To everything there is a season and a time" (Ecc. iii. 1).

III. The motive which should prompt this charity is God's goodness to us. "Remember thou wast a bondman in Egypt." How often does God appeal to us on this ground? Facts in our experience and history enjoin warmest and purest benevolence to the wretched and defenceless—facts which many would turn to the cherishing of rancour, malevolence, and misanthropic feeling. God regardeth not persons; He knoweth no ritualistic and national differences. "He it is that executeth the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and Who loveth the stranger to give unto Him food and raiment. Wherefore thou also must love the stranger, for ye yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt."

GLEANING A DIVINE ORDINANCE.

I. The privilege of gleaning as accorded to the Jews: "freely they have received" of God, and "freely they were to give."

II. The far higher grounds of this privilege as existing among us. Let it be recollected from what misery we have been redeemed, and can we find a stronger argument than this for liberality to the poor. Learn—1. As gleaners, avail yourselves of your privilege. 2. As proprietors, perform the duties that are here enjoined you.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1-4. *Divorcement.* An idea may be formed of the social state of Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era from the existing condition of the Jews in that country. "Wherever the teaching of the oral law prevails unchecked, as in the holy cities of the East, the concocting of divorces forms a chief branch of the business of a Rabbi—he is occupied incessantly in putting asunder what God hath joined—and as a consequence those cities are full of poor, unhappy divorced women and girls, with all the intrigues inseparable from a state of things which saps the very foundations of society."—*Jewish Intelligence, September, 1863.*

Ver. 8. *Leprosy.* By others' faults wise men correct their own. "Therefore," says Bp. Hall, "God strikes some that he may warn all."

Vers. 10-15. *Poor.* It was the advice of a bishop to a candidate for ordination, "Take care of the poor, and the Lord will take care of you." The history of that clergyman (who is still living) has most remarkably justified the wisdom of the counsel and verified the truth of the prediction.—*G. S. Bowes.*

Vers. 19-21. *Harvest field.*

"Ye who have sown,  
And reap so plenteously, and find the grange  
Too narrow to contain the harvest given,  
Be not severe, nor grudge the needy poor  
So small a portion. For He who gave  
Will bounteously reward the purposed wrong  
Done to yourselves; nay, more, will twice  
repay  
The generous neglect."

—*Hurdie.*

Ver. 22. *Stranger.*

Love's special care  
Are strangers poor and friendless.

—*Odys.*

Ver. 5. *Taken a wife.* After the battle of Granicus, previously to going into winter quarters, Alexander the Great proclaimed to all of his soldiers who had married that year, that liberty was granted them to return home to Macedonia and pass the winter in the society of their wives; appointing the officers to conduct this homeward-bound party and to bring them back to the army when their furlough was expired.—*cf. Jam. Com.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Corporal punishment. *Controv.*, dispute arising from inflicted injury. *Justify* pronounce just, Ex. xxiii. 7; Prov. xvii. 15.

2. Lie down. "Precisely the same as the Egyptian bastinado, which was applied to the bared back of the culprit, who was stretched flat on the ground, his hands and feet being bared by

attendants" (*Jam*). The law of Moses introduced two restrictions, the infliction of punishment in presence of the judge and the limit to 40 stripes. If a criminal deserved severer punishment he was executed.

5. **Ox.** In other kinds of labour oxen were muzzled. The spiritual sense is applied, 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18; Hos. x. 11.

5-10. **Law of Levirate Marriages.** This usage existed before the law of Moses (Gen. xxxviii. 8-11) and seems to have originated in patriarchal times, for preserving the name and honour of the eldest son—the chieftain of the family. The Mosaic law rendered the custom obligatory (Mat. xxii. 25) on younger brothers, or the nearest kinsman, to marry the widow (Ruth iv. 4), by associating the natural desire of perpetuating of a brother's name with the preservation of property in the Hebrew families and tribes (Num. xxxiii. 54; xxxvi. 9). If a younger brother declined to comply with law, the widow brought her claim before the authorities in public assembly (the gate of the city); she was ordered to loose the thong of his shoe (ver. 9) a sign of degradation—following up that act by spitting, not in his face, but in *his presence before him* on the ground (*Jam*.)

11, 12. Severe penalty imposed upon a shameless woman, who wilfully should endanger or take away the power of off-spring from a man, Ex. xxi. 22.

13-16. **Weights and measures.** *Divers, lit.*, "a stone and a stone"—one just and one false, or a light and heavy one. Weights consisted of stones; facility in procuring them tempted to fraud. *Measures, lit.*, "an ephah and an ephah," the common or standard measure in Israel. *Lengthened, cf. iv. 26; v. 16. Unrighteously.* Moses sums up all the breaches of the law. (*Keil*.)

17-19. **Doom of Amalek.** *Did, met, thee; i.e.*, stealthily and in hostile encounter; not found in Ex. xvii. 14. The Jews had not only to manifest love and kindness, but often to inflict punishment upon God's enemies. They were executors of Divine judgment upon Amalek and others; cf. 1 Sam. xv. 3, 32, 33.

### PUNISHMENT OF THE GUILTY.—Verses 1-3.

God took special care for the administration of justice. The guilty must be punished, and the innocent defended. It is the duty of earthly tribunals to govern in equity.

**I. Punishment incurred.** There must not be mere report or accusation. The accused and accuser must be brought face to face, the dispute decided before the authorities, and the criminal be found "worthy to be beaten." The wicked cannot sin with impunity. Punishment was demanded under the theocracy. Conscience predicts retribution and human magistrates are appointed to administer it. In doing so they are types of the eternal judge.

**II. Punishment inflicted.** We have special directors given to make the penal system just and effective. 1. *By the authority of the judge.* Not by some private heartless official wishing for revenge. Magistrates bear the sword, (Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 14, 21). 2. *In publicity.* "Before his face." This would be itself a part of punishment and a check to cruelty and excess. 3. *According to desert.* "According to his fault." There must be discrimination and rectitude. To justify the wicked and condemn the just would reverse the order of justice, and become "an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15). 4. *In measured degree.* "Forty stripes he may give and not exceed," v. 3. Stripes, few or many, according to guilt, but never to exceed forty. Punishment should ever be measured according to strictest justice. Our penal code has been disgraced by cruel administration, and punishment has often been excessive, outrageous, and beyond moral desert. "They shall judge it according to my judgments." 5. *With scrupulous fear.* Lest "thy brother should seem vile unto thee." Excessive punishment degrades humanity, dishonours law, and hardens the criminal. He must be corrected, reformed, and treated with humanity. "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."



THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR.—*Verse 4.*

The command not to put a muzzle upon the ox, is no doubt proverbial in its nature, and even in the context before us is not intended to apply merely literally to an ox employed in threshing, but to be understood, in the general sense in which the Apostle Paul uses it in (1 Cor. ix. 9, and 1 Tim. v. 18), viz. : that a labourer was not to be deprived of his wages. *Keil.*

I. Rights enforced by common usage. The use of oxen in treading out corn unmuzzled still prevails among Arabs and eastern nations. If God takes "care for oxen," we must treat them kindly. The ox is not a mere animal, but a labourer, contributing to the sustenance and help of man.

II. Rights enforced by special enactment. This was a wonderful provision in the law of Moses. Nothing was too trivial connected with men or brutes. God defends the rights of every creature, and teaches us to recognise the nobility of labour in the smallest law.

III. Rights enforced by Divine Law. This is a general principle, extending to the plougher and the sower. Toilers of hand and brain are not mere drones, but essential to the well-being of society. In all departments "the labourer is worthy of his hire." The highest authority applies the law to ministerial support (Luke x. 1). "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Tim. v. 18).

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 3. *Exceed.* Abuse of power in excessive punishment. Power given for *edification* not *destruction* (2 Cor. xiii. 10). "There is an honour due to all men (1 Pet. ii. 17), and though we must hate the sin, yet not the sinner," *Trapp.* The reason assigned by the legislator in this statute for restricting the number of stripes is very remarkable. It is not simply a motive of compassion for a sufferer—it is a respect for human nature, the rights of which are preserved even in a criminal. To inflict upon a man an excessive and degrading punishment is to outrage the feelings of those who witness it, and to pour contempt upon humanity itself. This humane character of the Mosaic legislation is deserving of special notice. How rigorous soever it may be in some respects, it upholds the dignity of man's nature, and does not permit even a guilty offender to "seem vile unto others."—*Jamieson.*

Ver. 4. *Not muzzle the ox.* Though enacted in a particular case, it teaches the humane lesson that animals, while engaged in the service of man, are entitled to his indulgence and kindness. Paul quotes this law (1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18), and shows that God did not appoint it for the sake of oxen alone, but that every labourer is worthy of his hire, and hence declares the obligation of men to exercise justice in properly rewarding those who labour for their advantage, especially those who labour for the good of their souls. The application, so far from weakening, seems to confirm its obligation and reference to that point, inasmuch as it displays to us that, in the eye of God, the same principles of equity are expected to prevail amongst all His creatures, and that they are not to be confined to our dealings with men.—*Jamieson.*

THE LAW OF LEVIRATE MARRIAGE.—*Verses 5-10.*

This law is not peculiar to the Jews, but is found in all essential respects the same among various Oriental nations, ancient and modern, and exists at present

among the South African tribes, the Arabians, the Druses, and the tribes of the Caucasus (*Speak. Com.*)

**I. The duty imposed.** The obligation was onerous and recognised as one of affection for the memory of the deceased. It devolved upon the neighbouring kinsman—"brethren that dwell together," not "a stranger." Affection is needful in married life. This cannot be forced. *Love* leads to duty and self-sacrifice.

**II. The design of the obligation.** (a) To prevent alienation of property; (b) To raise up seed. To be without issue was considered a great calamity (Gen. xvi. 4); a successor and heir a great blessing; (c) To perpetuate a name, "that his name be not put out of Israel." Parents are anxious to maintain the honour and preserve the name of the family. Loss of inheritance, alienation of the rights of the firstborn, are a disgrace. God's favour is better than fame which "is the shade of immortality, and in itself a shadow."

Unblemished let me live, or die unknown,  
Oh! grant me honest fame, or grant me none.—*Pope.*

**III. The reproach of neglecting the obligation.** It was not so binding as to permit no escape. If the brother preferred to submit to reproach. "If the man like not," he might refuse (ver. 7). Then the thong of his shoe was loosed, he was stripped of power and degraded as a slave. Spitting in the face or in his presence, was the strongest expression of insult and contempt. The man was not worthy to take his brother's place, was scornfully rejected by the woman herself, and his name became a bye-word in Israel. "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

### TRADE MORALITY.—*Verses 13-16.*

The language of Scripture on this point demands the serious attention of all engaged in trade. Principles of life are given in minute detail and enforced by special sanctions.

**I. God requires honesty in trade.** Not only in courts of law, but in commercial life, in the market place, and in the shop, justice must be done. There must be no different weights and measures; one for buying and another for selling; one light and another heavy. This was the iniquitous system of Jews. Accurate inspection may restrain gross deceit with us. But trickery and close dealing, evasion of legal rights, and deviation from honest trading are too prevalent. Advantage is taken of ignorance. Impositions, double-dealings and hard bargains are struck with cleverness and self-satisfaction (Prov. xx. 14). Christian professors and Christian churches have need of warning and care. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thess. iv. 6).

**II. Honesty in trade is enforced by special sanctions.** That which is the standard of measure, the rule of justice must of itself be just. If not there will be fraud and deceit. 1. *Justice will gain temporal advantage.* "That thy days may be lengthened in the land" (ver. 15). Right prolonged life and made it happy. As a matter of self-interest, "Honesty is the best policy." It will enrich spiritual experience, promote social morality and preserve national life. 2. *Justice will secure God's approval.* We must act as under his eye and seek "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Equity and not "customs of the trade" must be our law. "A false balance is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight (a perfect stone) is *his delight*" (Prov. xi. 1). 3. *Injustice will expose to God's curse.* "All that do unrighteously are

abomination unto the Lord." Man may excuse convenient lies, commend trickery for its wisdom (Luke xvi. 1-8) and cry "business is business," but such trading is hateful to God, will bring shame and curse upon those who practise it. "Divers weights (a stone and a stone) and divers measures (an ephah and ephah), both of them are alike abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xx. 10).

### THE CHRISTIAN IN COMMERCE.

The greatest difficulties in the way of a Christian commercial life, arise out of the practices which prevail. Enforce right conduct, you are met by an appeal to general sanction, and a reference to the consequences which would follow from its adoption, in ridicule and condemnation, in loss and suffering. Thus the Christian tradesman must shape his principles in the way of reform and opposition—

I. Endeavour to point out what Christianity requires of a man in his dealings in business with his fellow-men. 1. *Christianity requires the most rigid adherence to the principles of moral integrity in commerce.* Truth is one of these, which lies at the basis of all intercourse, and without which society would be impossible. All positive misrepresentations, all arts by which one thing is passed off for another, all false appearances given to things, and all deficient scales and measures, are condemned. *Honesty* is another Christian virtue in commerce. In giving everyone his due, in meeting all equitable claims. For a man to refuse to pay his debts is dishonest. "Owe no man anything." A debt is a debt until it be paid or forgiven. Bankruptcy is not payment. No earthly tribunal can exempt from the claims of eternal justice, and an honest debtor will deem nothing *his* while creditors are unsatisfied in fact or feeling. It is a grand saying of De Foe, "The obligations of an honest man can never die." 2. *Christianity requires the exercise of love and kindness in commerce.* A man may be just, and yet a monster of inhumanity. The Christian spirit of love should not be confined to some departments of human life and excluded from others. It is designed to create a higher morality than that of the world, it will dictate much which law cannot take cognizance of, and preserve for the wretched practice of exclusive dealing, of punishing a man for his politics or religion by withholding custom and thus making commerce the instrument of bigotry and exclusiveness. 3. *Christianity requires that a man should preserve his soul in peace and patience in commerce.* Commerce implies contact with others. It compels intercourse with men of powerful passions, different dispositions and opposite principles. Hence we are sorely tried, exposed to innumerable disappointments, vexations and annoyances. We may be deceived by those we trusted, and injured by those we benefited. All this must be endured in meekness, and the heart must be kept calm and unruffled, seek no revenge, but cherish the spirit of love. 4. *Christianity requires that commerce should be consecrated and elevated by the spirit of holiness.* There is a hardening and corrupting tendency in commercial pursuits. Constant calculation of profit and loss, incessant contemplation of pecuniary interests are apt to contract and debase the soul. The man who gives himself wholly to gain becomes earthly, sensual and devilish. All spiritual generous sensibilities and aspirations are destroyed. He becomes less malleable than the coin with which he deals. But Christianity teaches that commerce is a means, not an end; "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses;" that we may be yet having all things, and rich, yet having nothing. Commerce will be really noble and raised from the dust, when the higher faculties are cultivated



with secular pursuits ; wealth possessed and used in the spirit of stewardship, and a vigorous habit of Christian liberality finds a constant vent for the acquisitions of Christian industry.

II. Having described what a Christian should be in commerce briefly show why he should be it. All considerations by which religion and morality are commended and enforced are applicable here. The course pointed out is right in itself, what we owe to God and connected with eternal destiny. It is necessary to inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is presented to us in the example of Christ, whom all disciples should imitate. In one word, Christianity requires it ; all its precepts, principles, blessings, and prospects require it. But adduce some particular considerations. 1. *Commerce is a most important part of life.* It enters largely into our engagements. It is in some form or other the greatest part of the life of multitudes. Could a man be a Christian and yet not be a Christian in his dealings with his fellow-men ? Is it possible to retain the spirit of the gospel and yet not bring it into business ? The power of religion must be best displayed here. The truest test of a man's spirituality is in his secular life. It is often said, "A man is really what he is relatively." I would add a man is spiritually what he is secularly. 2. *Commerce is a most influential part of our life.* It is part of life with which men have most to do and of which they can best judge. It is the world-side of our religion. Ungodly men cannot see us believe and always hear us pray, but they behold our behaviour towards others. Though ignorant of doctrinal theology, and strangers to true spirituality, they are no bad critics of moral conduct. What then is our influence, if we be not holy in business ? What use saying, "I know the truth," if it can be replied, "You do a lie ?" What an agency in the conversion of the world would be a blameless secular life throughout the Church ! It would be better than an army of ten thousand missionaries. 3. *Commercial holiness is imperatively required by the character and temper of the times.* It is a commercial country and age in which we live, and commercial sinfulness is a prevailing feature. It is the duty of the Christian to adapt his example and display the virtue most wanted. Never more necessary for saints to "condemn the world" by secular integrity, to give a noble example for it to follow, and to bring a spirit from above to bear on its pursuits. (A. J. Morris.)

### THE DOOM OF AMALEK.—Verses 17-19.

"Whilst the Israelites were to make love the guiding principle of their conduct in their dealings with a neighbour, and even with strangers and foes, this love was not to degenerate into weakness or indifference towards open ungodliness. To impress this truth upon the people, Moses concludes the discourse on the law by reminding them of the crafty enmity manifested toward them by Amalek on their march out of Egypt, and with the command to root out the Amalekites" (cf. Ex. xvii. 9-16).—Keil.

I. Amalek's sin against Israel. "How he met thee by the way," stealthily and fierce encounter, in a most difficult and risky place, "in Rephidim" (cf. Ex. xvii. 8). 1. This attack was *unprovoked*. No occasion was furnished for it. Israel had not the remotest intention to injure the persons or seize the territory of Amalek. But they were jealous at the prosperity of Israel, as descendants of Esau entertained a grudge against them, and longed to injure them. 2. This attack was *cowardly*. It was a mean, dastardly, insidious surprise, not in front, but in the rear, on "the hindmost"—not on the strong and vigorous, but on "the feeble," "the faint and weary." We have a kind of reverence for the

brave, but cowards are objects of scorn and contempt. 3. This attack *was cruel*. Upon stragglers, upon a host tired in the march, almost unarmed and unable to resist. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." 4. This attack *was presumptuous*. "He feared not God." A defiance against God of whom they had heard, and whose mighty acts in Egypt and the Red Sea had defended his people. It was an insult, "a lifting up of the hand upon the throne of God" (*Marg. Ex. xvii. 16*). "The fear of God" alone can restrain from evil. When this is cast off, there will be no "regard for men."

II. Amalek's sin remembered by God. "Remember what Amalek did." A record was kept "in the book" (*Ex. xvii. 14*), and this conduct was never forgotten. 1. *Sin is never overlooked*. Silence may be kept at the time of commission. God may appear to connive; to *wink* at times of ignorance and sin (*Acts xvii. 30*), but they are not overlooked. If no direct interposition, men must not excuse, take courage, and cry God hath forgotten. God's patience is no proof that He thinks lightly of sin. *Sentence* is gone forth; Edom's doom was predicted, but warning is given, time for repentance afforded before execution. 2. *Sin is kept in remembrance*. A book of record is found somewhere. An impress is left upon nature, upon the human mind, and upon moral conduct. Wickedness is read in the pangs of conscience, the power of evil habits, and the moral forces of the universe. God prepares ministers of vengeance, and in due time the judgment will come.

III. Amalek's sin punished by God. Injustice and cruelty towards God's people will not pass unavenged. Joshua had punished them, but a more terrible doom awaited them. 1. *Punishment long delayed*. For some wise reason the honour of Jehovah was not vindicated at the time. The base attack was repelled, but the territory was not invaded—the final judgment was delayed. This was inflicted partly by Saul and David (*1 Sam. xiv. 48*; *xxvii. 8*; *xxx. 17*; *2 Sam. viii. 12*), finally and completely under Hezekiah (*1 Chron. iv. 43*). Judgment may linger, but it is "laid up in store." 2. *Punishment by those who have suffered*. God's people themselves, when fixed in privileges and possession, must inflict it. Power and position are not given for selfish enjoyment. We must be ready for warfare as well as for service. No pity, no pride must prevent us from executing God's will upon our enemies. "Remember," "thou shalt not forget it." 3. *Punishment most severe*. "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (*Ex. xvii. 14*). Fearful doom! But Scripture, Providence and human history confirm the law—"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11, 12. *Shameful insult*. No excuse in the plea to help her husband. "Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes."

Vers. 13-16. "*Customs of trade*." Often—(1) sinful, (2) corrupting, and (3) dangerous. "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (*Micah vi. 11*).

Vers. 17-19. *Amalek*. 1. Ungodly principles lead to wicked conduct. "Amalek feared not God." 2. Wicked conduct is not allowed to go unpunished in the providence of God. 3. This punishment when inflicted is full of suggestion—(a) *delayed* to prove the patience of God towards his enemies. (b) *severe*, to avenge His people, and teach the doctrine of retribution. "The portion of wicked men is to be 'forgotten in the city where they had so done'" (*Eccles. viii. 10*). Their memory

dies with them ; or if it be preserved, it stinks in keeping, and remains as a curse and perpetual disgrace" (*Trapp*). It is not always consistent with the purposes of the Divine economy to vindicate the honour of Jehovah by any general punishment at the time. But if no further notice had been taken, this contemptuous defiance of the power and majesty of God would have appeared to escape with impunity, a circumstance which might have degraded the Deity in the estimation of Israel, who judged of His power as

all other nations then judged of their guardian gods, by His rigour and promptitude in defending His people and punishing their enemies. He would not suffer Amalek to pass finally unpunished, but would authorise and employ them to inflict judgment, thus impressing His people themselves with the salutary conviction that where the majesty of Jehovah was insulted, *present delay of punishment affords no presumption of final impunity.*—(*Graves on Pent.*)

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1-4. *Judgment.* No obligation to justice does force a man to be cruel, or to use the sharpest sentence. A just man does justice to every man and every thing ; and then, if he be also wise, he knows there is a debt of mercy and compassion due to the infirmities of man's nature ; and that is to be paid ; and he that is cruel and ungentle to a sinning person, and does the worst to him, dies in his debt and is unjust.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Vers. 13-16. *Trade.* What signifies a man's trade? A man of honest trade can make himself respectable if he will (*George III.*). To be honest as this

world goes is to be one picked out of ten thousand.—*Shakspeare.*

Vers. 17-19. *Not forget.* Most just it is that he who breweth mischief should have the first draught of it himself.—(*Jemmat*). For inquisition shall be made into the counsels of the ungodly, and the sound of his words shall come unto the Lord for the manifestation of his wicked deeds (*Wisdom i. 7-9*). Mercy to him that shows it is the rule by which heaven moves in pardoning guilty man ; and he that shows none, being ripe in years, and conscious of the outrage he commits, shall seek it and not find it in his turn.—*Cowper.*

### CHAPTER XXVI.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The rehearsal of rights and duties, public and private, terminates in this chapter with two liturgical enactments. These have a clear and close reference to the whole of the preceding legislation, and form a most appropriate and significant conclusion to it. (*Sp. Com.*)

1-11. **First fruits.** *Fruit.* Visible proof of possession ; distinguished from those offered in harvest (*cf. Ex. xxii. 29*), at feasts of Passover and Pentecost, and from offerings prescribed (*Num. viii. 8*). These are private and personal—not national.

3. **Priest.** Owned the first fruits as property. *Profess*, a confession of offerer, of indebtedness.

5. **Syrian.** (*Lit. aramæan*) from residence with Laban in Syria. *Perish*, by Laban's severity and many hardships in nomadic life. *Egypt* (*cf. Gen. 46*).

6. **Evil.** On multiplication and oppression in bondage, and guidance out (*cf. Ex. i. ii. iv.*).  
v. 11. **Rejoice** either in the possession of blessings given, or in feasting with friends, Levites, and strangers.



12-15. Tithin. *Third year's tithe* employed at home in charity and hospitality.

13. Hallowed. Consecrated, things devoted to holy uses. *I have not.* Not a self-righteous boast, but solemn declaration that nothing which should be devoted to God had been secretly kept back.

14. Mourning. "When the Israelite would be unclean;" or like Egyptians made in harvest time, offered the first fruits of earth and kept feast of Isis in doleful lamentation. *Unclean*, unworthy of divine acceptance. *Dead* in funeral service as some; or to idols, deified heroes and lifeless images—all things were dedicated to glad and holy, not to unclean and idolatrous purposes.

15. Look. Form of thanksgiving (*cf.* Is. lxiii. 15).

16-19. Faithful obedience. "A brief and earnest exhortation by way of conclusion to the second and longest discourse of the book." *Avouched*, solemnly pledged themselves to obey; accepted Jehovah as their God, who had declared that if they kept the covenant they should be His special people.

19. Above. (*cf.* Ex. xix. 6). "The sanctification of Israel was the design and end of its divine election, and would be accomplished in the glory to which the people of God were to be exalted."—*Keil*.

### GAINING THE INHERITANCE.—Verses 1-11.

Reference had been made to the sanctuary as the place chosen by God and fit for religious worship (chap. 12). Two gifts specially connected with the social life of the people had to be presented—the first fruits and the second tithe. Moses now prescribes the form of the interesting ceremony, which reminded the nation of their indebtedness, and duty to God.

I. An acknowledgment of God's help in getting the inheritance. God was very prominent in Israel's history and position. Precept and command, rite and ceremony, reminded them of this. 1. *God promised the inheritance.* Good and great things are promised to us to wean affection from earth, excite hope, and stimulate effort. God presents worthy objects on which to centre hope, and gives grace by which it may be realised. 2. *God settled them in the inheritance.* Good may be withheld and fulfilment delayed through ingratitude, unbelief and rebellion. But if we are faithful and follow God, he will fulfil the promise and lead us "into the land." We shall possess without fear; dwell without disturbance, and no power on earth can uproot us. He can "establish (fix), strengthen (for defence), and settle" (1 Peter v. 10).

II. A confession of unworthiness to receive the inheritance. No merit is due to us. If inheritance is *given*, it is not created by human toil and skill. From beginning to end of life God must be honoured and man humbled. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 1. *Humble in origin* (ver. 5). The "nation great, mighty and populous" sprang from "a few," the many from one, "a Syrian ready to perish." God is wonderful in working, and brings great results from small beginnings. "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase" (Job viii. 7; xlii. 12). 2. *Helpless in history.* Few, hated, and oppressed, what could Israel do? "The mighty hand" and "the outstretched arm" alone could deliver, defend, and secure the inheritance. The might of Egypt, the perils of the desert, and the dangers of conquest were overcome by God's help. With omnipotence on our side we can do anything. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm" (Ps. xliv. 3).

III. The duty imposed by securing the inheritance. Duty means debt. God's bounties always put us under obligation. The response should be hearty.

“What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us?” 1. *To consecrate the first fruits.* “Thou shalt take the first of all the fruit of the earth.” Conscientious and careful dedication of first fruits is required. Everyone should bring his “basket” to God as an acknowledgment of mercy. This in token of the sanctification of the whole. “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.” 2. *To worship God in public.* The offerer had “to go into the place” which God had chosen. The gift must be accompanied with public worship and confession; “worship before the Lord” (ver. 10). Remembrance of Divine goodness kindles adoration and praise. Fervent praise is acceptable to God, and leads to love and amity in His people. 3. *To cultivate social joy* (ver. 11). God has made us prosper, and we should make others glad. Gifts received in the right spirit and used in the right way enlarge our sympathies and help us to promote the enjoyment of our fellow men. The highest will remember the lowest in society. The most wealthy will seek out and relieve the outcast and most degraded. In the spirit of Christ we shall “sit down” with strangers and fatherless, “with publicans and sinners, and eat with them.”

### DIVINE HELP IN HUMAN LIFE.

Israel had “come” to the land, but the way had not been discovered and cleared by their own guides. They had been “brought unto the place,” almost carried like helpless children by Divine goodness. It was fit that they should know, confess this and learn lessons of wisdom. “The private life of man,” says Napoleon I., “is a mirror in which we may see many useful lessons reflected.”

I. *Divine help in timely circumstances.* Life is full of change, a journey “through many a scene of joy and woe.” But God helps “in time of need.” 1. *In periods of risk,* “A Syrian ready to perish” was Jacob. The cruelty of Laban, the wrath of Esau and the perilous journey to Egypt endangered life. “There is but a step between me and death,” said David. 2. *In periods of adversity.* “Evil entreated, afflicted and under hard bondage” (ver. 6). This prepares us for advancement, as it did Joseph, David, and Israel. The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor can we be perfected without suffering. 3. *In periods of prosperity.* “The day of adversity” is not our *entire* lot. “The day of prosperity” is equally a divine appointment. “God also hath set (made) the one over against (like parallel with) the other” (Ecc. vii. 14.) We need divine instruction especially in prosperity, to humble and show us our unworthiness (Gen. xxxii. 10). To keep us dependant and grateful, and remind us of our origin and history. “Look unto the rock whence ye are known, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

II. *Divine help secured through prayer.* “We cried unto the Lord our God” (ver. 7). Prayer teaches dependence upon God. In trouble we have an incentive to pray. Men who have ridiculed have then been compelled to acknowledge God. In affliction and danger prayer is earnest and prolonged. “We cried unto the Lord.” Confidence in God has given courage and gained success in battle. Moses and Elijah were the real defence of Israel; Hezekiah and Isaiah brought down blessings upon Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxii. 20-23). “The good man’s prayer moves Omnipotence in the administration of the universe.” It is a mighty, moral force in the history of men; it has achieved what numbers and valour never could achieve. “Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.”

**III. Divine help acknowledged in grateful remembrance.** Several forms of memorial are given. Sensible signs are often needful to quicken memory and prompt gratitude in reviewing past life. 1. *In self consecration to God.* There can be no worship without this. Attendance and reverent attitude are outward acts. The heart must be touched and drawn out before we can offer spiritual service. Nothing can rise above its limits. A beast cannot act as a man, and a man perform the work of an angel. Neither can the impenitent, ungrateful sinner render true worship. Only when love fills the heart and mercy is duly appreciated do we present ourselves "as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God." 2. *In acts of practical piety.* The Israelite was not merely to "profess" (ver. 3), but perform, "take the first of all the fruit." Words are cheap but deeds are scarce. God requires sincerity as well as sacrifice. The first fruits of time and mental vigour. The produce of our land and the share of our gains belong to Him. The best of everything should be offered to God. "The first fruit of thy corn, of thy vine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give Him." 3. *In works of perpetual charity.* Love to God must show itself in benevolence to men—the divinity we preach be seen in the humanity we practise. Charity must never fail. Relief must not merely be given in "deserving cases," to persons "worthy of help," but to the undeserving. "The world is the hospital of christianity," and the duty of the Church is to seek out the destitute and aged, those in great suffering and unable to work. This is the mark of "pure religion" says James i. 27. This gained Job a character which his friends could not assail, and a reputation which they could not tarnish (xxx. 16-22). "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that those bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Is. lviii. 6, 7; l. 17).

#### GOD'S GIFTS.—Verses 9-11.

The dedication of first fruits was an act of worship, an acknowledgment of God's bounty, and a confession of entire dependence upon Him for every mercy received.

**I. God's gifts bestowed in rich abundance.** Deliverance, security, health, and honour—the fruits of the earth and the profits of business. Everyone has personal experience to relate of thrilling interest;—escape from danger, incidents of travel, re-union of friends. What "signs and wonders" in our past and present life!

**II. God's gifts designed for human happiness.** "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing"—in private comfort or in social festivity. We are objects of God's constant care and kindness, and others should be remembered and share with us. Our gifts are not for selfish indulgence. We must not be like the Caspian Sea which receives rain and rivers which flow into it, and which is said not to have an outlet—not a rill to run from its waters. "Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared" (Neh. viii. 10).

**III. God's gifts dependent upon obedience for continuance.** What we have may be taken away if we do not improve it (Mark iv. 25). The diligent worker gathers to himself what is lost by the idle, and talents not used pass away from the possessor. "If we do not use, we lose."—*Matthew Henry*. Temporal mercies can never produce holy joy unless used for God. Withhold the first fruits and the whole may be withdrawn. Give and you shall possess "a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. xi. 27; xxx. 1, 15).



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 3-6. Gratitude to God enforced.** We shall I. Point out our duty in reference to the mercies we have received. For this purpose we ought—1. To review them frequently; 2. To requite them gratefully. II. Recommend it to your attention. It is—1. A universal; 2. A reasonable; 3. A delightful duty.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

**Ver. 5. Great results from small beginnings.** 1. In the history of Israel. 2. In personal history. 3. In history of the Christian church. What hath God wrought! Admire the power of God; recognise the providence of God; acknowledge dependence upon God.

**Ver. 11. "Duty of delight."** A duty specially appropriate to a Christian upon whom all gifts of grace and sweet influences are bestowed by a reconciled God. "Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. vi. 17). This was—I. An O. T. principle, "Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). 2. A N. T. command. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (1 Th. v. 16). "Finally, my

brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. iii. 1). 3. A duty sadly forgotten. "They dwell on the duty of self-denial, but they exhibit not the duty of delight," says Ruskin.

This verse exhibits—1. *The will of God.* Some say "they will suffer for it" if they are glad, as if God grudged happiness to His creatures and took hard compensation for their enjoyments. They forget that God's nature is a joyful nature—that the element in which He lives is a joyful one, and that when He communicates good and bestows a new nature they are parts of His joy. Showing forth praise is a work and a witness for God in a joyless world and a thankless race.

"A sunshine in a shady place."

2. *The nature of true religion.* See the exquisite sense that is in this wonderful book, the Bible. The one extreme is you must live an ascetic, denying yourself everything; the other extreme is, you must live like an epicurean, enjoying exclusively a monopoly of everything. The prescription of the Bible is, take the food that God sends you, thank Him for it, rejoice in it.

## THE SACRED USE OF COMMON GIFTS.—Verses 12-15.

The second year's tithe, or vegetable tithe, instead of being taken to the sanctuary as in other years, was devoted to hospitality and charity at home (*cf.* xiv. 28.) At "the end of tithing," a solemn declaration was made before God that the law had been strictly fulfilled, and nothing reserved for personal use.

**I. Nothing had been misappropriated.** In many ways God's gifts are misapplied. 1. *In ways of uncleanness.* "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning," when the Israelite would be unclean (Lev. xxi. 1; Hos. ix. 4). Sorrow should not be associated with thanksgiving and joy in God. The blessings of life tend not to degrade, but to elevate and dignify. 2. *In alienation from sacred purposes.* "Neither have I taken away aught for any unclean use" (ver. 14). For any common use different from that appointed—gifts have a sacred as well as secular use. They are desecrated if spent upon ourselves or in sin. They are God's property and must not be used as we please. He has claims upon us. The Levite, the widow, and the fatherless, represent His claims. To neglect them is to disobey and insult Him. 3. *In consecration to unlawful practices.* "Nor given aught for the dead." In funeral expenses or feasts of

mourning which were often urgent and unforeseen. Houses of mourning or idolatrous customs, it would be unlawful to sanction. Our gifts are abused if diverted from hospitality and religion, if devoted entirely to worldly customs or forbidden uses.

**II. Everything had been duly performed.** Nothing had been withheld. "I have hearkened and done all thou hast commanded." If disobedient, this solemn confession was a lie—an act of hypocrisy! The danger of the Church to-day is not from outward assailants, but from unfaithfulness and inward corruption, from false vows of mere professors and partial consecration of real believers. The precepts of the Gospel and the spirit of the Master lay a tax upon the worldly goods and personal sympathies of the wealthy and gifted. If from selfish motives we keep back some and profess to have devoted all to God, we act the part of Ananias. Every one should declare the supreme worth and manifest the inward beauty of truthfulness. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight!"

**III. Everything was enjoyed by permitting others to share it.** "I have given them unto the Levite and unto the stranger," etc. (ver. 13). Dedicated things were devoted to glad and holy feasting. Do good to all men, for they are God's creatures. But the necessitous are the special objects of God's care, and should partake of our beneficence. "God hath left his poor saints to receive his rents" (*Gurnall*). Alms given to them are lent to God (Prov. xix. 17) and will be paid back with interest in their increase and enjoyment. We double our joys and increase our own store when others share them. "We should remember the poor" (Gal. ii. 10).

#### PRAYER AND CHARITY.—*Verses 13-15.*

The tithes were to be presented, a declaration made that they had not been withheld, and then an earnest prayer offered for the land and the people who dwelt in it (ver. 15).

**I. Prayer and charity united in Christian life.** We have the aspect man-wards and godwards. Love as you are loved; forgive that you may be forgiven, bestow that you may receive again. Alms and prayers spring from one root and are bound together by one law. Cornelius "was a devout man, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts x. 3).

**II. Charity no ground for boasting in prayer.** We only do our duty that we are commanded to do, when we help the destitute. This affords no ground for pride and the spirit of the Pharisee—a self-complacent and self-vaunting spirit. Instead of numbering fasts, tithes and merits; we must forsake our sins, love God and our neighbour as ourselves (*cf.* Luk xviii. 11, 12). "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone."

**III. Prayer that charity may be constantly practised.** We cannot give to others unless blessed ourselves. Constant prayer secures constant supply. "Ask and ye shall receive." Prayer begets dependence, fitness to receive, and readiness in bestowing our blessings. Our liberality should ever be the outcome of our gratitude to God. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 13-15.** *Devotion and daily life.* Integrity in daily life the condition of acceptable prayer. Prayer reminds of shortcomings in daily life

—should prompt to self examination and obedience.

**Ver. 15.** *Prayer and patriotism.* The prosperity of the nation (*land*)

intimately connected with the moral condition of the people. A blessed people, a blessed land. "We must learn hence to be public-spirited in prayer, and to wrestle with God for blessings for the land and nation, our English Israel, and for the universal Church, which we are directed to remember in our prayers, as the Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

*Reverence in prayer.* 1. For God is Holy. Holiness becomes His house. 2. For without His cognizance we could get nothing. 3. It is marvellous condescension to hear at all. "Took down from thy holy habitation." 4. All that He bestows is from sovereign mercy. "Which thou hast given us."

#### A MEMORABLE DAY.—Verses 16–19.

"This day" was a time of solemn admonition, of wonderful pledges between God and His people, and of deep spiritual significance.

**I. A day of beneficent deeds** (ver. 16). Laws had been revealed for worship and life. The people had vowed to God that they had liberally devoted "their hallowed things" to the needy. Distress had been relieved, hearts had been gladdened, and burdens removed. Giver and receiver had been thankful, and rejoiced together before the Lord.

**II. A day of solemn dedication to God.** "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God" (ver. 17). Their hearts had been weaned from idolatry and self. God's providence had brought them on their journey, and God's goodness enriched them with blessings. Gratitude bound them to God, and they pledged themselves not to forget nor disobey him. Canaan would have been a dark and dreary land without Him. His presence, like sunshine, fills all hidden recesses of life, and makes creation glad.

**III. A day of distinguished privileges from God.** God accepts His people's pledge generously, espouses them, and makes new discoveries of His love. 1. *In material pre-eminence.* "To make thee high above all nations." Eminence and honour come only from God. "Glory, honour, and immortality" are reserved in heaven for well-doing (Rom. ii. 7). 2. *In spiritual adoption.* He chose them to be His own special and "peculiar people" (verse 18). They were elevated in position and moral condition—brought near to God by obedience. Christians have a special place in God's regards on earth. In heaven the relation will be complete. 3. *In moral purity.* "That thou mayest be an holy people" (verse 19). This was the end of their obedience and exaltation. They were chosen to be holy (Eph. i. 4). Moral purity is the highest honour. Worldly greatness will never satisfy the cravings of the heart. Holiness is the admiration of friends, a terror to enemies, and the end of life. "All the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 16–18.** Ready obedience and great reward. 1. *The law of God revealed.* Divine in origin, wonderful in history, authoritative in claims. These injunctions are not devices of men, but *commandments* of God. 2. *The voluntary obedience to law.* They

willingly and publicly avowed God to be their God. They were to do, not to dispute the commands. It is not enough to read and understand them. They must be sincerely, faithfully and universally kept. Not as the result of human energy, but of Divine in-



fluence (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). 3. *The expression of Divine pleasure at this voluntary obedience.* Jehovah reciprocates the feeling, "The Lord hath avouched thee." Natural and supernatural blessings are pledged in variety. Loyal obedience secures present favour, and will gain future honour and renown. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."

Ver. 19. *High above all nations.* It is written, righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. xiv. 34). While Israel regarded God's word, and kept His testimonies, they were the greatest and most respectable of all nations; but when they forsook God and His law, they became the most contemptible.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 2-4. *First.* This is the rule of sacrifice—a costly precept to the worldling and the formalist. But to the servant of God, it is a privilege to lay aside a portion with the sacred stamp, "This is for God." This sacred devotedness is the true road to riches (Prov. xi. 24). God challenges us to "prove him now herewith," if the abundant harvest, and the overflowing vintage shall not put unbelief and covetousness to shame (Neh. iii. 10; 2 Chron. xxxi. 5-10).—*C. Bridges.*

Ver. 5. *Few.* Athens and Rome, Babylon and Persia, as well as England and France, rose by slow degrees to their unrivalled eminence. Whereas, the Huns and Vandals flashed in their terrible greatness for a few years, and passed unto oblivion as mysteriously as they rose into power.—*Dr. Brewer.*

Vers. 6-9. *Our affliction.* Suppose, Christian, that the furnace was seven times hotter, it is but to make you seven times better; fiery trials make golden Christians (*Dyer*). "God's children," says an old author, "are most triumphant when most tempted;

O Britain! even more highly favoured than ancient Israel, learn wisdom by what they have suffered. It is not thy fleets, or thine armies, howsoever excellent and well appointed, that can ultimately exalt and secure thy permanence among nations. It is righteousness *alone*. Become irreligious, neglect God's ordinances, profane His sabbath, despise His word, persecute His followers, and thou art lost.—*A. Clarke.*

Vers. 17-19. *Covenanting with God.*

I. Our covenant engagements. 1. To accept God as our God. 2. To act towards Him as becomes us in that relation. II. Our covenant advantages. 1. God will own us as His people. 2. Bestow on us blessings worthy of that relation: holiness, honour, and happiness.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

most glorious when most afflicted; most in favour with God when least in man's esteem. As their conflicts, so their conquests; as their tribulations, so their triumphs"—

The good are better made by ill,  
As odours crushed are sweeter still.

*Rogers.*

Vers. 10, 11. *Rejoice.* Who partakes in another's joy is a more humane character than he who partakes in his grief.—*Lavater.*

All who joy would win  
Must share it—happiness was born a twin.—

*Byron.*

Vers 12-14. *Done all.* People in general have no notion of mixing religion with common life—with their pleasures, with their meals, with all their thoughts. Hence it is they think that their Maker is an enemy to happiness, and that religion is fit for the closet only.—*Mayow.*

Ver. 15. *Look down.* Prayer and thanksgiving are like the double motion of the lungs—the air that is sucked in by prayer is breathed forth again by thanksgiving.—*Godwin.*

**VERS. 16-19.** *Above all.* Do not forget that greatness before men is sometimes littleness before God, and that every man who lives only to love God and to do good to his fellows is in the sight of his Maker truly great. It is honour and blessedness the greatest to belong to the army of Jesus Christ—to be holy, loving and faithful, a witness for God, an instructor in His House, a benefactor among men.—

(*J. E. Rosoman*). In the estimate of honour he should learn to value the gifts of nature above those of fortune; to esteem in our ancestors the qualities that best promote the interests of society, and to pronounce the descendant of a king less truly noble than the offspring of a man of genius whose writings will instruct or delight the latest posterity.—*Gibbon*.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Connect this chapter with verse 16 of preceding one, where Moses concludes discourse on plains of Moab. Here he dwells on sanctions of the law and sets forth in striking detail the blessings of obedience and curses of disobedience.

**1-4.** On the day of entrance into the land, stones must be erected and the law written on them. *Elders*, rulers, and representatives of tribes, prominent, because they would require what was due after death of Moses. *Great stones* fulfilled (Josh. viii. 30-32). *Plaster*. Daubed with paint or white cement to make conspicuous. Writing not to be cut into stone and then covered with slime. *All words*, not the Decalogue, nor the blessings and curses following, nor the Book of Deuteronomy, but all laws revealed from God by Moses, not historical, didactic and non-legislative matter in Pentateuch, but simply its legal enactments (*cf. Speak. Com.*). *Ebal*, the place specified for stones (chap. xi. 29). Now *Mad-el-daen*.

**4-8.** More details. *Altar*. None used in ordinary cases except brazen one at door of tabernacle, but on this occasion they were to renew the covenant and offer sacrifices. *Stones*, not covered with slime, but unhewn, according to Ex. xx. 25. *Offer burnt offerings and peace offerings*, symbolic of entire dedication and enjoyment of Divine grace.

**8.** Plainly. To read easily.

**9-10.** Heed. An appeal for attention. When the covenant was renewed and law set up in Canaan, Israel bound themselves to hearken and keep the commandments.

**11-26.** Form and manner of the solemn blessing and cursing. Tribes appointed to stand on Gerizim sprang from two wives of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel. All the four tribes located on Ebal, from handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah—Reuben is added, probably because he lost his primogeniture (Gen. xlix. 4); and Zebulun, because youngest son of Leah (*Speak. Com.*).

**14.** *Levites*. Only to speak aloud, *i.e.*, to pronounce the different formularies of blessing and cursing. In pronouncing benedictions they turned towards the multitude on Gerizim, from whom rolled back the *Amen*; in turning to Ebal, in distinct and solemn tone they received back the same impressive *Amen* in ratification of each blessing and curse.

**15-26.** Twelve curses against transgressions of the covenant. The first eleven directed against special sins, selected by way of example; the last comprehensively sums up in general terms and condemns all and every offence against God's law.—(*Speak. Com.*)

**15.** *Image*. (*cf. 4, 16; Ex. xx. 4; Lev. xxvi. 1.*) *Secret place* set apart as a shrine. This covers private as well as public image worship.

**16.** *Light*. Disregards, or lightly esteems parents (Ex. xxi. 17; Lev. xix. 3).

**17.** *Landmark*. (*cf. Deut. xix. 14.*)

**18.** *Blind*. Lack of consideration for suffering (Lev. xix. 14). *Perverteth*, taketh advantage of desolation (Ex. xxii. 21; Mal. iii. 5; Ps. lxxviii. 5).

**20-23.** (*cf. Lev. xviii. 23; xx. 15.*) Heinous sins springing from unlawful passions, destructive of bodily vigour and family bliss.

**24.** *Secretly*. To kill him (Gen. ix. 5).

**25.** *Reward*. (*cf. Ex. xxiii. 7, 8.*) For this section *cf. Josh. viii. 30-35.*

THE MEMORIAL PILLARS.—*Verses 1, 4, 9 and 10.*

Instructions are given for setting up pillars or stones, on which the law must be written. This was a common mode of publishing edicts or laws in ancient times. The design of these pillars is significant. They assert :

I. The principle on which the Land was held. "On the day," when they had crossed Jordan, they must halt, erect great stones and remember their title deeds. The entering into the land, its conquest and permanent possession depended upon certain conditions. 1. *They took possession through God's covenant.* That day they had become the people of God. He was about to give them the land which he had promised. 2. *They could keep possession only through obedience to that covenant.* "Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord" (ver. 10). The law is set up, the covenant solemnly renewed, and the national policy fixed. All progress and prosperity depend upon God. Obedience to him will give access to the land with its beauties and products, access to possession and gladness. Harkening unto his voice we succeed in all enterprises and positions. Never forget the terms on which you enter in. Everything is given in mercy and only kept by obedience—"That thou mayest go into the land."

II. The Perpetuity of the Divine Law. "Write all the words of this law." The law was unchangeable, adapted to Israel in the wilderness and in Canaan, to every nation and every age. We are apt to forget it. New conditions of life efface it from our minds. It must, therefore, be preserved and perpetuated—written not on pillars and parchments, but in the heart and life. "Written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

III. The obligation to keep this Divine Law. It must ever be prominent and lifted up before us. The covenant must not simply be ratified but kept. 1. *This is pressed with authority*—"I command you." Not the mere act of Moses and the elders, but the expression of God. 2. *This is pressed with earnestness.* "Take heed and hearken, O Israel" (ver. 9.) Moses, the leader, is earnest. The priests and Levites are earnest. Feeling the obligation ourselves, we must be urgent in pressing others. Delight in God's law and passionate concern for others should ever characterise ministers and leaders. The very name and calling impose responsibility upon God's Israel. The Lord hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments (ch. xxvi. 18 : Ex. xix. 5.)

THE STONE ALTAR.—*Verses 5-7.*

An altar was set up, besides monumental stones. No tool must be used in its preparation. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were to be offered as in the covenant of Sinai, and a festive entertainment was to follow. Notice the erection and design of this altar.

I. The erection of the Altar. Patriarchs erected an altar to express gratitude to God and confess dependence upon Him. 1. *The circumstances.* As soon as they entered into Canaan, the stones and altar must be fixed up. Many would counsel delay. They were in a strange place, surrounded by enemies, and must prepare for defence. God is our best defence. In every new situation, enterprise, and possession God must be first. Acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy steps. 2. *The material.* In rough material, without the touch of an iron tool (ver. 5). Perhaps to indicate that God requires no help from man in



making atonement for sin, no art and co-operation in setting forth his claims. Decorations in worship pre-occupy the mind, and may lead to idolatry. At any rate, nature is God's work, pure and holy. Man, by contact, may pollute it; hence the altar for expiation of sin must be free from taint and human corruption. "Thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex. xx. 25).

**II. The design of the Altar.** Burnt offerings were expiatory, signs of dedication of life and labours. Peace offerings were expressions of gratitude for benefits received, tokens of reconciliation with God. Both were offered to mark (1) Israel's gratitude for blessings of covenant relation; (2) Israel's determination to consecrate themselves wholly to God's service (*cf.* Ex. xxiv. 5). In the sacrificial meal they entered into blessings of divine grace and enjoyed ritual communion with God. Thus were they divinely taught and solemnly pledged by this public ceremony to carry out their sacred obligations. Sin must be expiated by sacrifice before we can have access to God. But God has made provision. In faith and obedience "thou shalt eat, and shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God."

### THE STONES AND THE ALTAR.—*Verses 2-7.*

There is an intimate relation between the two, symbolic of spiritual truth—

**I. The stones represent the demands of law.** Stern and exalted, requiring perfect and constant obedience. Plain and adapted to man in its revelation—testifying against all disobedience. Law must exist—can never be abolished nor give life. It brings curse and condemnation.

**II. Altar represents atonement for violations of law.** Law has been satisfied in its demands. God has made provision for access, pardon, and peace. Without sacrifice there is no remission of sin. Law stands erect and unyielding as the pillars of stone. The altar indicates propitiation and grace. We are set free, redeemed from the curse of the law, that we may honour God in obeying it. By the stones *God* speaks to us; on the altar *we* sacrifice and speak to *Him*. Thus communion is real, vital, and complete.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 2, 3, 8.** In these verses it appears that Israel set up a monument on which they must write "the words of this law." 1. The monument itself must be *very mean*; only rough unhewn stones covered over; not with polished marble or alabaster, nor brass tables, but with common plaster. The word of God needs not to be set off by the art of man, nor embellished with "enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. ii. 4; Col. ii. 4). 2. The inscription *was to be very great*. "All the words of this law." Some say the ten commandments, others the five books of Moses, but probably only an

abridgment of the book of Deuteronomy or the blessings and curses here set down (*cf.* Josh. viii. 34).—*Wilson.*

**Ver. 6. Altar.** This atonement is introduced in the very midst of the moral law, that the people of Israel might be pointed forward to that great provision through which the breaches of that law might be forgiven, and in which strength might be found for obedience (*Cumming*). At all events, the stony pile was so large as to contain all the conditions of the covenant, so elevated as to be visible to the whole congregation of Israel; and the religious

ceremonial performed around it on the occasion was solemn and impressive—consisting, *first*, of the elementary worship needed for sinful men; and, *secondly*, of the peace offerings, or lively social feasts that were suited to the happy people whose God was the

Lord. There were thus the law which condemned and the typical expiation—the two great principles of revealed religion (*Jamieson*). *Very plainly*, ver. 8. Not very finely to be admired by the curious, but very plainly that he who runs may read.—*Mt. Henry*.

### BLESSING AND CURSING.—*Verses 11-14.*

The curses only given, and not the blessings. For as many as were under the law, were under the curse. It was reserved for Christ to bless, to do what the law could not do.

I. The special places. Gerizim was one pulpit and Ebal another. Their isolated position made them naturally suitable for the occasion. (*cf. Stanley, Sinai and Palestine.*) But their moral import is significant. One may suggest bondage, another freedom. Both set forth what nature may become, a blessing or a curse, according to its use. Creation is in sympathy with man, responds to his moral condition, and is wasted or blessed by his moral conduct. "Things take the signature of thought."

II. The appointed agencies. On the sides of the mountains the tribes were drawn up, six on one, and six on the other side. The priests pronounced, in loud tones, blessings and curses. On Gerizim were stationed descendants of Rachel and Leah. On Ebal the posterity of the two secondary wives of Jacob, Zilpah and Bilah, with those of Rueben, who had lost his primogeniture—the children of the bondwoman and the children of the free. (Gal. 4, 23.) The moral of the mountains is legible enough. Men, according to training, history and position, have power to do good or evil. Their ascent on the mount of wealth, learning and success, will be a source of blessing or curse to those below them. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." (Gen. xii. 2.)

### CURSES AND RESPONSES.—*Verses 25, 26.*

Previous laws had prohibited these things, but now God openly declares a curse upon offenders.

I. The curses pronounced against transgressors. Twelve in number answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. The *first*, against those who make graven or molten images of Jehovah, and set them up in secret, that is to say, against secret breaches of the second commandment (Ex. xx. 4); the *second*, against contempt of, or want of reverence towards parents (Ex. xxi. 17); the *third* against removing boundaries (chap. xix. 14); the *fourth*, against leading the blind astray (Lev. xix. 14); the *fifth*, against perverting the right of orphans and widows (chap. xxiv. 17); the *sixth*, against incest with a mother (chap. xxiii. 1; Lev. xviii. 8); the *seventh*, against unnatural vices (Lev. xviii. 23); the *eighth* and *ninth*, against incest with a sister or mother-in-law (Lev. xviii. 9, 17); the *tenth*, against secret murder (Ex. xx. 13; Num. xxxv. 16); the *eleventh*, against judicial murder (Ex. xxiii. 7, 8); the *twelfth*, against the man who does not set up the words of the law to do them, who does not make it the model and standard of life and conduct. This last curse applied to every breach of law and proves that the different sins mentioned were selected by way of example and were mostly such as could be easily concealed from judicial authorities.

The office of the law is shown in this last utterance, the summing up of all the rest, to have been pre-eminently to proclaim condemnation. Every conscious act of transgression subjects the sinner to the curse of God, for which none but He who has become a curse for us can possibly deliver us (Gal. iii. 10-13).—*Keil.*

II. The curses publicly ratified by the people. It is easy to understand amen to blessings, but how could the people say it to curses? They felt and acknowledged the equity of them. The response was not a mere profession of faith in the truth of the curses, but an open declaration that they were just, true and certain. Their amen was the expression of deep conviction, the approval of law which brands sin with a curse. 1. *Scripture* says amen. 2. *Conscience* says amen. 3. *The universe* of God says amen. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Just and true are thy ways."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 11-15. *A Wonderful Scene.*  
1. The locality. Describe the valley between Ebal and Gerizim (*cf.* Tristram *Ld. of Is. Bonar and Stanley*). 2. The Actors, Priests, tribes and people distinctly, loudly and solemnly reciting their parts. 3. The audience. Their *position*, sat on sides of the mountains; *attention*, waiting in awful silence for the utterance. "Take heed" (ver. 9); *response*, "Amen." What a grand assembly! What a solemn purpose and how serious the consequences!

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely  
players  
They have their exits and their en-  
trances, etc.

*Shakespeare.*

*Secret Sins.*—Most of the sins were secret, but are brought to light by the Omniscient Judge, and receive their just desert. 1. Men outwardly moral may be addicted to secret sins. 2. God will discover these sins, pronounce sentence, execute judgment upon them. "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of

darkness, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

Ver. 15. *Amen. A little word of big meaning.* 1. An acknowledgment of the supremacy of moral law. This law is a real force, above all contingency and human control. Right and wrong are eternal verities, written in the nature of things, and can never be altered. *Amen*, "so be it." 2. A confession of justice in the administration of His law. God is absolutely supreme, a law to himself. Right is not independent of his will, cannot be accomplished without his providence, what he wills must be done, *because* right. Dr. Payson once asked if he saw any special reasons for some particular event, replied, "No! but I am as well satisfied as if I could see a thousand. God's will is the very perfection of reason." "*Amen*, so be it." 3. A submission to the decisions of this law. These decisions may be opposed to our wishes and anticipations, but there is no injustice in the government of the world. "*Amen*, so be it." "Shall even he that hateth right govern, and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?" (Job. xxxiv. 17.)

#### IDOLATRY, OR SINS AGAINST THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.—*Verse 15.*

This command against image worship in public or private, sets forth:—

1. The Spirituality of the Divine Nature. The words forbid any image of Jehovah in a material form. Other nations had images, regarded them with



superstitious veneration, and were influenced by seductive practice. But God will have no likeness of him, no representation, to becloud his spiritual essence or rank him with forms of matter. Images lower the conception of Deity, tend to make him the product of human thought and ingenuity, and degrade the worshippers. "God is a spirit" entirely separate from matter. "To whom, then, will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare to him?" (Is. xl. 18).

**II. The Spirituality of Divine Worship.** We are forbidden to worship God by graven images. 1. *In material forms.* This was prohibited in Rome by Numa, a Pagan prince, yet allowed by the Pope, a Christian bishop! Devotion to God must not be excited, directed and helped by pictures and crucifixes—symbols which are liable to take the place of truth symbolised and lead to sensual worship. "Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods." 2. *In fanciful forms.* Worship is often will-worship (Col. ii. 23). We fancy a God, cut and carve one like ourselves in our evil imaginations. Our worship is governed by the power of imagination, not the power of faith. "We are the offspring of God," our life is the breath of the highest life, and our moral nature makes us kin with Him. "We ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts xvii. 29).

### FILIAL DISHONOUR.—Verse 16.

This sin is against the fifth commandment. Obedience to God first, then respect for parental authority, which represents God.

**I. What these words imply.** First, lack of true affection. Then irreverence, disobedience, and defiance. If there be no love, no right feeling, children will soon dishonour and reproach their parents. It is more than uncharitable, uncivil or unjust, to withhold from them what is due. "In thee have they set light by father and mother." The instincts of nature, the demands of conscience, and the word of God, require honour to father and mother.

**II. What these words require.** Gratitude for existence, sustenance, and education. Love, trust, and filial fear. Submission to rebuke, instruction, and correction. Endeavouring to be comfort and support in time of need. Never to despise and mock our parents. "He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death." The poet Cowper expressed true feeling when presented by his cousin with a portrait of his mother. "I had rather possess that picture than the richest jewel in the British crown; for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated."

### MEN OF INJUSTICE.—Verses 17–19.

Three forms of cruelty and injustice are here given—

**I. An unjust neighbour (verse 17).** Removal of landmarks a secret way of injuring a neighbour and breaking the law of love—disregard to his will and property. An act springing from selfishness, pride, a spirit of oppression and covetousness. Disregarding the authority, and confusing the heritage God gave to families. An old form of dishonesty, robbing your neighbour to increase your own lands; tempting flocks and herds out of other folds into your own. "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set" (Prov. xxii. 28).

**II. An unjust counsellor (verse 18).** It is specially cruel to impose upon the ignorant and defenceless—to misdirect the blind or cause them to stumble

by treachery, deceit, and wrong advice. To help the deaf and blind has always been considered an act of benevolence. Job "was eyes to the blind" (xxix. 15). Tenderness is enjoined by the apostle—"That no man put a stumbling block, or occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. xiv. 13). The deaf and blind may be unable to detect the offender and bring him to an earthly tribunal, but God hears when the human ear is deaf, and sees when the human eye is dark. "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander."

**III. An unjust judge.** Widows and orphans have lost protectors. No advantage should be taken of their poor and helpless condition. Justice should be done to the *stranger*, ignorant of our laws and customs—to the *widow*, too poor and weak to secure legal advice. Judgment must never be perverted by bribes to judges, by sophistry of advocates, and by evidence false and manufactured. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation" (Ps. lxxviii. 5).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 15. Images.** 1. Men eject God from heart and mind. 2. Make, set up, worship and keep rivals or antagonists. 3. This command, forbidding all false gods, would bring man into right attitude with God. *Craftsman.* A profession sinful, degrading and dangerous.

**Ver. 16. Setteth light.** Notice the close relation between reverence to God and reverence to parents. Cursing a parent was punished as blasphemy against God (Lev. xx. 9). *Unnatural despisers of parents* in many ways; resistance to authority—contempt of reproof, denying obligation—needless exposure to sin. Every village bears testimony to this crying sin. Solon asked why he made no law against parricides, replied that he could not conceive of anyone so impious and cruel. God knows man better. The heart is capable of wickedness beyond the imagination of the heathen sage. *Cursed.* Absalom self-willed and rebellious against his father, made a reproach before the people (2 Sam. xviii. 9-17). Confessions on scaffold

that the first step was contempt of parental authority and restraint. If not literal fulfilment, often retributive judgment late, but certain, in disappointed hope, poignant anguish and corrections from their own sins (Jer. ii. 19).

**Vers. 17. Landmark.** 1. Every man has certain rights—political, social and religious. 2. These rights should be respected—not to be removed. They are sacred and inalienable. We have plenty of liberty in our own sphere without encroaching upon the rights and in the boundary of others. 3. Violation of these rights, sinful and risky. Intense selfishness—social injustice—disregard of divine order and will bring a curse. "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark."

**Vers. 17-19. Principles of humanity.** 1. Respect for rights of property (ver. 17). 2. Tender regard for the unfortunate (ver. 18). 3. Justice administered to the helpless (ver. 19).

#### SINS OF UNCLEANNESS.—Verses 20-23.

Sins which spring from lust destroy the sacredness of the human body and dissolve family relationships. Learn—

**I. That men have a tendency to commit great sins.** Judgment is perverted, the heart alienated, and the power of evil habits drives men deeper into self-

corruption. The blackest crimes have disgraced humanity—incest, adultery, robbery, fratricide, and murder. Pride has been in active conflict with personal and social liberty. Covetousness has dried up the wealth of provinces and the sources of enterprise. Sensuality has wasted the strength and manhood of the people. "Pleasure has mounted the throne and shame departed from the heart." Paul's terrible indictment (Rom. i. 16-32) is not more severe than that of Tacitus and Seneca—"All things are full of crimes and vices."

II. That this tendency has existed in all ages. It is not the birth of modern civilization, but old as human nature itself. In Jewish and Gentile world, in corrupt and enlightened ages man is the same the world over. The principles that prompted to these crimes are alive and at work in every unregenerate heart in the present day. Moral corruption invariably follows religious debasement. "For this cause God gave them up unto vile (shameless) affections (passions); for even their women (who lost modesty, a priceless jewel) did change the natural use into that which is against nature," &c. (Rom. i. 26, 27).

III. That God seeks to preserve men from great sins. By His *word*, with its fearful warnings, threatenings, and promises. By His *spirit*, enlightening the mind, discovering dangers, renewing the disposition and destroying the tendency to evil. By His *providence*, in putting barriers in the way, checks to prevent crime; and by His *grace*, to form and strengthen habits and efforts the very opposite. Sins of the deepest stain, and the most inveterate strength may be overcome. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

### MURDER.—*Verses 24, 25.*

Two kinds of murder are here mentioned, secret murder and judicial or murder under colour of law.

I. Murder is an offence to God. It may be secret and undiscovered, but the curse of God rests upon it. If bribed or hired to convict and condemn the innocent; then it makes the ordinance of God to patrouise villany and shame (1 Tim. i. 9.) Man is "made in the image of God." Not simply life, but *the man himself* is sacred and divinely guarded. To destroy the work is to dishonour the workman. "Thou shalt not kill."

II. Murder is an injury to society. Men owe duties to one another as well as to God. Respect for life is one of the first duties. Murder destroys the security of life, defeats the primary object of human government, brings disgrace to the murderer and entails suffering upon the murdered and his relations. Society is outraged by the crime, and its welfare demands the punishment of the criminal. "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death."

### THE DEMANDS OF GOD'S LAW.—*Verse 26.*

In general terms this verse sums up all offences against the law. In itself and in its connection it is instructive, not subordinate truth, ornamental and non-essential. Reference is made to it in the New Testament, as a vital fundamental truth, lying at the roots of the Gospel, and setting forth the permanency of moral obligation.



**I. God's Law is the standard of duty.** It legislates for individuals and nations in all relations of life ; it comprehends every duty, and touches every act. 1. *Divine in origin.* Not of human invention. No mere conventional rules made by civil governors, by priestcraft, and by philosophers. Not as the edict of a master mind did Moses publish the law, but as the distinct utterance of *God Himself*. "The *Lord* talked with them from the heavens, and *God* spake all the words of this law." 2. *Spiritual in nature.* The law is spiritual, originating from the spirit of God and appealing to the spirit of man. It relates not merely to outward acts, to parental discipline, social custom, and civil government, but to "the thoughts and intents of the heart." It demands right feelings and right thoughts. Christ tells us that it is heart-life which determines our guilt or innocence in the sight of God (Mt. v. 21, 28). 3. *Clear in its demands.* Spoken distinctly, and appealing to the senses at Sinai (Ex. xix. 16). Written plainly on the pillars (ver. 8), and now printed for us. We cannot plead ignorance nor mistake ; we cannot complain of uncertainty and want of light to guide us in worship and the discharge of duty. The law is high as the summit, loud as the thunders, and bright as the flames of the mount on which it was given. It is holy, just, and true.

**II. Obedience to God's Law must be perfect.** It requires us not only to abstain from wrong, but to do that which is right. 1. *Perfect in extent.* "All the words of this law." There must be no choice, no omission, no extenuation. Actual breach of one involves neglect and contempt of all. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend *in one point* (one commandment), he is guilty of all, *i.e.*, becomes liable to condemnation under indictment which includes all particular commandments of the law (Jas. i. 10.) 2. *Perfect in duration.* There must be a confirmation, a *continuation* in every act of life. For under the covenant of works to break down only one moment, even the last, is to be lost. "Obey my voice and do them, according to that which I command you : so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer. xi. 4).

**III. Imperfect obedience to God's law will bring a curse.** Who has given or can give *perfect* obedience in every thought, word and deed ? The blot of a single sin on a character pure as that of an angel would seal our doom. "Do and live" is the voice of law, "but the soul that sinneth shall die." No middle sentence between these two and not a whisper of mercy. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Every mouth is stopped before God. All are guilty and exposed. We must either continue in misery, bear the curse, or appeal from law to gospel. It is terrible to be cursed by men, but to be cursed by God, who never errs in judgment, nor ceases to warn—what must this be ! But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 19.** 1. A dependent class, objects of pity. "The stranger, fatherless, and widow." 2. Advantage is often taken of this class. This law is repeated, indicating strong inclination among the Hebrews to ill use strangers, and anxious desire in the legislator to

check it. The same tendency discovered in modern days.

**Vers. 20-23.** 1. *Abominable crimes.* Common in Canaan and Egypt, to the last degree of unnatural mixture. Condition of Sodom, and passages in

Pauline epistles, confirm the corruptions of the heathen world. 2. *Awful consequences if not checked.* (a) Men demoralised by lust and bestiality. (b) Laws of consanguinity violated by illicit intercourse and incestuous marriage. (c) Social retribution follows. Land unproductive by sloth, luxury and effeminacy of the people. The country an easy prey to the foreigner (Persia, Turkey). (d) The anger of God displayed. God curses such crimes by nature, providence, and conscience.

Many a crime deem'd innocent on earth  
Is registered in heav'n, and these, no doubt,  
with a curse annex'd.  
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
But God will never.

—Cowper.

Ver. 26. From this we see that every precept of the holy law is equally obligatory, and that he that is guilty of a breach of one is guilty, not merely of breaking an individual law, but of

insurrection and rebellion against the Great Author and Inspirer of the law—the Lord God of Israel. We thus learn that the breach of one precept is regarded by God as an impeachment of His jurisdiction and authority as King and Lord. View sin then not lightly, not as a mere breach of an isolated law, but as insurrection against the Great Law-giver himself. This truth also disposes of the principle of the Pharisee, that excessive and scrupulous attention to one law was an atonement for daily disobedience to another. The more we study the law, the more searching, inquisitive and comprehensive we find it. What a solemn truth, that all born into the world are born in the eclipse, by nature under the curse. “By deeds of law no flesh shall be justified.” If you feel convinced of sin, condemned in your heart, flee to Christ. For what the law could not do, that God hath done in his son, etc.—*Dr. Cumming.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 2-4. *Write.* Stones and even rocks are seen in Egypt and the peninsula of Sinai, containing inscriptions made 3000 years ago, in paint or plaster, of which, owing to the serenity of the climate, the coating is as firm and the colouring as fresh as if it had been put yesterday.—(*Jamieson.*) I have seen numerous inscriptions of this kind of writing more than 2000 years old, and still as distinct as when it was first inscribed on the plaster.—*Thomson Ld. and Bk.*

Vers. 9, 10. *Heed.* God esteems our actions and works, not according to the greatness or exactness of the performance, but according to the sincerity and truth of our hearts in doing them (*J. Meade*). Child-like obedience moves towards every command of God, as the needle points the way the loadstone draws. If God calls to duties which are cross to flesh and blood, if we are children, we obey our Father.—*Watson.*

Ver. 15. *Image.* Yet man—this glorious creature—can debase His spirit down to worship wood and stone, and hold the very beasts which bear his yoke and tremble at his eye for sacred things.—*Landon.*

Ver. 16. *Father.* It is certain, whatever can be signified by fear and honour and reverence, is the duty of children—that is, so far as to think honourably of parents—to speak well of them, to conceal their faults, to excuse them to others, and to comport themselves with reverence and great regard before them. Grieve them in nothing; this is the sweet measure.—*J. Taylor.*

Ver. 17. *Removeth.* Covetousness debaseth a man's spirit.—*Archbishop Tillotson.*

“Desire of having is the sin of covetousness

—Shakespeare.  
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Ver. 18. *Wander*. Deceit is only a game played by small minds.—(*Corneille*). *Cursed*. It is a double pleasure to deceive the deceiver.—*Fontaine*.

Ver. 19. *Judgment*. I mistrust the judgment of every man in a case in which his own wishes are concerned.—*Wellington*.

Vers. 20–23. *Evil passions and lusts*. “If I had but character,” said Mirabeau, “if I had but been a good man, if I had not degraded my life by sensuality, and my youth by evil passions, I could have saved France.”—*Farrar*.

“Passion is the drunkenness of the mind.”  
—*Spencer*.

Vers. 24–25. *Slay*.

“Murder may pass unpunish’d for a time.”  
But tardy justice will o’ertake the crime.  
*Dryden*.

Ver. 26. *Law*. The main strength and force of a law consists in the penalty annexed to it.—(*Blackstone*). Hard and imperious law has not a word of encouragement for the sinner, not a grain of sympathy, not an atom of help—nothing but an awful threat of judgment and fiery vengeance on his failure. President Garfield truly said “Coercion is the basis of all law. A law is no law without coercion.”—*T. Griffith*.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—Moses now enlarges and gives the blessings and curses in detail (*cf.* Ex. xxiii. 20–23 and Lev. 26.) The blessings are declared in fourteen verses; the curses require nearly four times as many. Thus here again the curse is the more conspicuous feature in the law *Speak. Com.* Obedience the condition of blessing and this is repeated at beginning (verse 2) middle (29) and close (verses 13, 14) in positive and energetic form.

1–6. Blessings actual powers which follow and overtake them in all relations of life. Field (verse 3; Lev. xxvi. 3.) Body (verse 4), *i.e.* children. Basket (verse 5) for carrying articles for personal use (Deut. xxvi. 2). Store *lit.* kneading-trough, in which daily bread is prepared (Ex. xii. 34). Comest in all journeys or affairs and administrations (Num. xxvii. 17; Deut. xxxi. 2; 2 Sam. iii. 25).

7–14. Effects of blessings expressed in the optative forms earnestly desired. May the Lord bless, etc. Conquest over enemies (verse 7). Flee in rout, in many ways. Storehouses (verse 8) underground generally (Lev. xxvi. 7, 8). Exaltation (verse 9). Holy (Ex. xix. 5, 6; Deut. vii. 6). Called (verse 10) rightly and truly a most excellent and favoured people. Plenteous (verse 11) *lit.* shall make thee abound in good, superabundance for good, *i.e.* for happiness and prosperity (*cf.* 30, 9.) Treasures rain and fruitful seasons. Head (verse 13) independent in power and dignity (Is. ix. 14; xix. 15). Tail not vassals. (Verse 14) emphatic conditions on which blessings depend.

15–19. Curses proclaimed in sixfold repetition, the exact counterpart of blessing almost. “The special modes in which these threats should be executed are described in five groups of denunciations,” verses 20–68. (*Speak. Com.*)

20–26. First group. *Cursing* (*cf.* Mal. ii. 2) on all they do, issuing in various forms of disease, famine, and defeat in war. *Vex*. Confusion, as armies in defeat (*cf.* vii. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 20), *Pestilence*. Fatal epidemic (1 Kings viii. 37; Amos iv. 10). *Consumption*. Wasting sickness, not European phthisis. *Fever*. Acute disease. *Sword*. Others drought or heat; curse rests on vegetation. *Brass* (verse 23). Hard, dry, and shut up from giving rain. *Dust* shall fall like showers—dry, and as a burning sirocco (verse 25). *Smitten* (*cf.* Lev. xxvi. 17; Is. xxx. 17). *Removed*. Not dispersion among heathen, but driven from one place to another without settlement. *Meat* (verse 26), a great horror, the case with many Jews in Antiochian persecution (Ps. lxxix. 2).



27-34. Second Group. Loathsome diseases, and humbled and oppressed by calamities. *Botch*, black leprosy, peculiar to Eg. (Ex. ix. 9). *Emarods*, fistula or piles. *Scab*, scurvy. *Itch*, most malignant in East. Verse 28. Mental ailments, bewilderment, and paralysed with terror. *Mad* (Jer. xxv. 16-18). *Grope*, like the blind, in painful uncertainty (Is. lix. 10). Verse 30. Utter spoliation. Everything dear taken and not *restored* (verse 31). *Might*. All help would fail (Gen. xxxi. 29).

35-46. Third Group. As such diseases separated from men so Israel would be separated, rejected by God and brought under the dominion of strangers. *Knees*. Incurable leprosy, affecting joints, extremities, and whole body. *King*. A prophetic anticipation. No king given under Mosaic system. *Serve*. Seduced or compelled by idolatry as in Assyrian and Babylonish captivity (Jer. xlv. 17-19).

38. In their own land curse would rest upon labour and enterprise (Mic. vi. 15; Hag. i. 6; Joel i. 4). *Worms*. Weevil destructive to vines. Vers. 43, 44 compare with vers. 12, 13 *Sign* (ver. 46). A warning to other nations. For ever. A remnant would return to faith and obedience (Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5).

47-57. Fourth Group. More severe calamities are described in subjugation to a foreign foe.

49. Nation. Some think the Chaldeans. "But it needs only to read this part of the denunciation and to compare it with the narrative of Josephus' *De Bell. Jud.* VI. to see that its full and exact accomplishment took place in the wars of Vespasian and Titus against the Jews, as indeed the Jews generally admit." *Speak. Com. Eagle*. Roman ensign (cf. Mt. xxiv. 28). *Fierce* (ver. 50). Strong of face (cf. Dan. vii. 23), upon whom nothing would make impression. The foe would consume cattle, besiege towers, and so distress them that they would eat the fruit of their body, i.e., their own children (2 Kings vi. 24-30; Jer. xix. 9). The effeminate man would have an *evil eye*, i.e., envy toward a brother who had *nothing left* to give to the revolting viands.

5. The tender woman would be led to appease hunger by her *young one*, her after-birth, and then with her children.

58-68. Ultimate issue of the curse in uprooting Israel and dispersing them if obstinate in rebellion *Book the Law or Pentateuch*. The diseases of Egypt would decimate them remarkably fulfilled in persecution and war. God, who had done them good, would rejoice over their destruction; those who survived would be scattered (cf. Lev. xxvi. 33; Jer. xvi. 13; Eccles. xlviii. 15; Jos. *De Bell. Jud.* VI. ix. 2). They would find no rest (cf. Jer. xxvi. 36; Amos ix. 4). Life would be suspended on a mere visible thread, which might be snapped any moment (ver. 66). Brought out of Egypt by mighty power, they would be carried back in slave ships and become bondmen.

## NATIONAL OBEDIENCE AND UNIVERSAL PROSPERITY.—Verses 1-6.

National obedience would be rewarded with extraordinary prosperity.

I. Prosperity in city and country (verse 3). The *city* needs God in business; councils, boards, and counting-houses would never increase and prosper without Him. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that (are builders of it) build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). The *field*—such a contrast from the city, for "God made the country, but man made the town"—needs God's sunshine and shower. In trade and agriculture they would prosper if obedient.

II. Increase of population and of cattle (verse 4). "The fruit of thy body." A numerous offspring was promised to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 17). Children healthy and happy "are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. cxxvii. 3). There should be increase in cattle, kine, and flocks of sheep, and the ground should produce enough to keep them.

III. Abundant supply of the necessities of life. In their basket and in their store they would never want—enough for personal and domestic use, no scarcity in anything. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

**IV. Safety in all journeys.** "When thou comest in and when thou goest out" (verse 6). We need constant protection on sea and land, in train and market traps. What wrecks, what accidents we read of! How we depend upon God! Never safe, never easy, if He suspends His favour! If He bless, go where we will and engage in what trade we like, all is well. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

**EFFECTS OF DIVINE BLESSING IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE.—Verses 7-10.**

The effects of God's blessing, like the influence of gentle showers, would be diffusive and rest upon them in all circumstances and conditions of life. This is seen in three relationships, to their enemies, to trade, and to other nations.

**I. Supremacy over enemies** (ver. 7). They shall be smitten and put to flight in various ways. A small number would over-match a mighty host. On God's side we are on the right side. "God and one man are always a majority" says one. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

**II. Success in all undertakings.** "In all that thou settest thine hand unto" (ver. 8). In all handicraft and labour, in what they had and in what they did they would be blessed. If rich, we must not be idle. Accumulation of wealth may be accumulation of sorrow. Life which may be a continual feast may be a constant vexation if not faithful to God. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, etc."

**III. Increase of national glory.** This glory is special, universal and certain.

1. *In renewed covenant.* God would exalt them in character and position according to the oath which he made from the first. An oath never forgotten, but specially mentioned and confirmed for help and encouragement to His people. They were a peculiar and special treasure unto Him above all people.
2. *In exalted holiness.* "An holy people unto himself" (ver. 9). He not only takes them, but keeps them in the covenant. Establishes them in holiness and truth. This is the highest honour. Outward prosperity decays like a flower, withers away like Jonah's gourd; but the glory of holy character and conduct is a glory that excels.
3. *In great wealth.* "Thou shalt lend unto many nations and thou shalt not borrow" (ver. 12). The borrower is always servant to the lender. But they would have money to lend, never be reduced to straits, to dependence upon others—never become victims of cruelty, nor even objects of sympathy.
4. *In mighty power.* "The head and not the tail." Never servile, but always supreme. "Above only rising in wealth, dignity, and power, and not beneath." This realised in the time of David and Solomon. Loyalty to God is the way to ascendancy among nations. "The ancient and honourable he is the head."
5. *In universal favour* "All people of the earth shall see and be afraid of thee" (ver. 10). When God is with us, and his glory reflected in holy life, men reverence our grandeur and fear our authority. The nearer to God, the greater our influence over men. An obedient holy Church would be a formidable power, "terrible as an army with banners." All people would see its spiritual distinctions, feel its moral force and mysterious influence (Acts ii. 43; iv. 13; Jos. ii. 10, 11). "There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land."

**WONDERFUL BLESSINGS.—Verses 1-14.**

**I. Blessings extensive in their character** (vers. 3-7). Given to Israel first, but for every nation that fears God and keeps His commands. Reaching into

the future and enduring for ever. 1. *Wide in their sphere.* For family and city, social intercourse, business and war. Comprehending everything needful for a nation's wealth, health, and happiness. 2. *Abundant in variety.* Rain in its seasons, increase of cattle and flocks, increase of men and of honour. Temporal and spiritual in going out and coming in, upon individuals, households and possessions.

II. Blessings certain in their bestowment. Not merely by the soil of Canaan or the laws of Nature; but by special promise and special providence "Thy God *will* set thee on high." "All these blessings *shall* come upon thee." We speak of "the reign of law," and forget that all laws physical or spiritual are ordained and controlled by one supreme lawgiver. Fidelity to God prompts to right use of means and reaps the results of natural laws. "All things work together" (in harmony, not in opposition) for good (as the result) to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28).

III. Blessings conditioned in their enjoyment. Not given at random and without special design. The conditions of their tenure are plain—1. *Attention to God's will.* "If thou shalt hearken diligently"—eager and diligent attention given to every word of God. 2. *Obedience to God's commands.* "To observe and to do all His commandments"—obedience habitual, sincere, and devout. 3. *Perseverance in good.* Unswerving in principle, apostacy would provoke divine judgments. These are the conditions, repeated in positive and negative form, in verses 2, 9, 13, and 14. "Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (ver. 14).

### IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF LIFE.

We may sum up the preceding thoughts in a brief sketch of the principles which ought to influence our conduct.

I. That our future happiness largely depends upon our present conduct. "If thou shalt." Man is free to choose, obedience is not forced. Life and death set before us, which shall it be? "Choose ye."

II. That obedience to God alone will secure this happiness. God has pledged this; a kind providence fulfils the pledge, sends blessings in *time* and *place* where most needed.

III. That therefore obedience is the best policy for nations and individuals. There is intimate connection between conduct and destiny, between morality and worldly prosperity. Regard to our own interests, to divine law, and to the future welfare of the country urge decision for God—instant and earnest decision. "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *The happy journey.* I. *The direction indicated,* "overtake thee:" 1. Started for God and His service, or could not be overtaken. 2. Obedient to the guide. The voice heard. God's will revealed in Scripture or could not

be fulfilled. 3. Progress made. No loitering, no standing still, constantly going on. II. The blessings which accompany those who walk in this direction. All good things mentioned shall come upon them, overtake



them and rest upon them in every stage of their journey—"Unexpectedly befall thee. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow thee' (Ps. xxii. 6), as the evening sunbeams follow the passenger, as the rock-water followed the Israelites in the wilderness and overtook them in their stations (1 Cor. x. 4). 'O continue,' or draw out to the length, 'thy loving kindness unto them that know thee' (Ps. xxxvi. 11). There will be a continued series, a connexion between them to all such."—*Trapp.*

Ver. 5. *Store.* Cicero saith, one friend should wish to another three things only, to enjoy health, to possess honour, and not suffer necessity. He that observeth God's commands, shall have all these and more.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 7. *The routed enemy.* This is a world of conflict. Incessant war between truth and error. This verse describes I. The enemy's attack. 1. It was united: gathered into one force; 2. Concentrated. II. The enemy's defeat. 1. Not a strategic movement; 2. But a disorderly flight (*ill.* morning at Waterloo: the evening cry—"Let him save himself who can"). III. The cause of the defeat. 1. Not by the courage of Israel, or sagacity of leaders. 2. But the help of God.

Divine help is sometimes most apparent (*ill.* Armada scattered by storm). Learn (1.) To serve God in times of peace, and then (2.) you may safely trust him in times of war.—*Bib. Museum.*

Vers. 9, 10. *Israel's pre-eminence.*

1. In relationship to God. 2. In temporal prosperity, abundant harvest, etc. 3. In the influence over international counsels. Ver. 10. *Be afraid.* The homage of the world to moral worth. God's name, God's glory reflected in human character, will not merely command respect, but receive the homage of conscience, and conversation—Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and Daniel, Herod and John, Pharaoh and Joseph.

Ver. 12. *Heaven God's storehouse,* earth depends upon this storehouse—Canaan especially required rain. God keeps the key, opens and shuts according to his good pleasure, to discipline and train the people.

Vers. 12, 13. 1. *God in Nature,* giving rain and fruitful seasons. II. *God in history,* bestowing wealth to individuals, exalting nations to dignity favouring the good and confounding the evil.

#### DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS PENALTIES.—Verses 15-20.

The curses are given as counterparts of blessings (vers. 16-19) in sixfold repetition, covering all relationships of life, corresponding to verses 3-6—Learn:

I. If men are disposed to act rightly, they may be happy. Difficulties lie not in the Lord, in the providence or in the sovereignty of God; all things are ready with him, but men are unwilling. Jerusalem "would not." Obedience is the surest way to happiness. "Righteousness tendeth to life." Walking in the precepts we enjoy the promises of God. God appeals to us, seeks to dispose, not to compel us to do right, "Will ye?" If we serve him, we find that in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death.

II. If men persist in doing wrong they may be ruined. "If thou wilt not hearken." 1. *Ruined in business.* "In city and in field," in commerce and agriculture (ver. 16). If we love gain and forget God, our schemes may be upset and security taken away. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right" (Prov. xvi. 8). 2. *Reduced in daily necessities.*

"Cursed in basket and in store" (ver. 27). God gives daily bread, sends scarcity and want at his pleasure. Life is sustained, not by bread only, but by his will. If in the midst of plenty, we offend God, the blessings may be turned into curses. 3. *Disappointed in family prospects.* No fruit of the body: or if children, sickness, and death cut them down in early bloom. No lambs for the flock, no increase of kine; God does not bless and multiply them, but suffers cattle to decrease and disappoints expectations. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just" (Prov. iii. 33). 4. *Unsafe in journeys* (ver. 19). A kind providence watches over a good man; but the wicked, through imprudence and neglect, often meet with mishaps. God alone can make our journey prosperous (Gen. xxiv. 21), and for this a Christian will pray (Rom. i. 10). Such are some of the ways in which a man may be ruined. The very reverse of former prosperity and a sure indication of God's providence.

III. Hence persistence in wrong doing is most foolish. Heedless, impetuous, and thoughtless, stripped of all they esteem valuable, exposed to mischief, and deaf to divine learning, sinners go on to their doom. Conduct most reckless and most criminal! God expostulates but in vain. Fighting against God and their own interests! What monstrous folly! What infinite mercy to prevent irremediable destruction. "Ye fools, when will ye be wise?"

#### FIRST GROUP: SIN AND SUFFERINGS.—Verses 20–26.

Judgments are grouped together in series. Examine each in order. From the first group, learn—

I. That sin brings miseries. Sin and suffering are bound together by iron chains. This is—1. *A doctrine of Scripture.* "He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." "The wages of sin is death." 2. *A law of nature.* "Curses never come causeless." Sin is violation of natural order, and suffering must follow as season follows season. 3. *A Divine appointment.* Misery springs not from the dust, but is linked by Divine decree to evil doing. Moral laws are as certain in operation and results as natural laws. We cannot evade the issues of conduct; the seed determines the nature of the crop, and the sowing the reaping.

II. That the miseries of sin are often most distressing. What a list in these verses! 1. *Consuming pestilence.* Cleaving unto men, cemented and inseparable—defying the skill of the physician and the efforts of sanitary authorities. 2. *Manifold bodily diseases* (ver. 22). Germs of disease float in the atmosphere, and are developed by the conduct of depraved men. Moral poison destroys physical beauty and life, and covers the body with sores and diseases. 3. *Terrible drought.* Destroying vegetation by "blasting and mildew" (ver. 22). Early and latter rain withheld, and the earth hard and incapable of cultivation. Heaven above as brass, and earth beneath as iron. The surface of the ground reduced to powder, which is taken up by strong winds and poured down in showers of destructive violence (ver. 24). 4. *Defeat in war.* A nation ever victorious through God, bereft of his help, smitten by the enemy; fleeing away in disgrace; "removed into all the nations of the earth," or left on the field exposed to indignity, "meat unto all the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth" (ver. 26). Sin brings ruin—ruin in everything connected with the sinner—ruin in body and soul, in family and estate. We

best serve our own interests, and preserve our well-being, for this world and the next, by acting in conformity with God's word.

"When sorrows come,  
They come not single spies,  
But in battalions."—*Shakespeare*.

### ABOVE AND BENEATH.—Verses 23-24.

These words have a moral application and may typify spiritual dearth.

**I. Above abundant supplies.** A storehouse full of good things, ready to be poured out. The Holy Spirit and showers of divine blessings. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

**II. Beneath, parched ground.** The ministry needs quickening. The Church languishes. Failure of effort and lack of conversions. The vineyard of God unfruitful and the world perishing. "Popularize your societies" is the cry of many; we say *vitalize* them. "I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness."

**III. How to remove the sterility.** It is not designed to be permanent. 1. *Forsake sin.* This brings blight and curse. "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." 2. *Pray to God.* "Prayer," says Robert Hall, "is a spring which the Almighty never fails to touch when He has a rich blessing to communicate to His church." Unexpected and marvellous things may be witnessed through prayer. "Prove me now herewith, said the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 20. The Threefold Curse.** Cursing, vexation, and rebuke. 1. *Moral in its cause.* "Wickedness of thy doings . . . Thou hast forsaken me." 2. *Extensive in its scope.* "In all that thou settest thine hand unto." 3. *Long in its duration.* "Until." 4. *Terrible in its end.* "Destroyed." "Perish quickly." . . . "The first of these words seems to import that God would blast all their designs; the second relates to disquiet and perplexity of mind arising from disappointment of their hopes, and presages of approaching miseries; the third respects such chastisements from God as would give them a severe check and rebuke for their sins and follies."

**Ver. 22. Seven Plagues.** What a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God!

**Vers. 23, 24. The pitiless storm.** 1. Endangering life, blinding eyes, filling nostrils and mouth, making it difficult to breathe and drive in the street. 2. Creating intense thirst; the lips crack, and no water to slake burning thirst. 3. Affording no shelter; often no bush, no rock, no friendly house to hide from the fierce simoon.—*Cf. Dr. Porter, and Ld. and Bk. II. 311, Thom.*



SECOND GROUP: THE POWER OF GOD IN THE AFFLICTION OF MEN.— *Verses 27-*

Once the sinner having set himself against God, he of necessity suffers in mind, body, and estate. The primitive laws of nature become executors of God's power and judgments.

**I. God's power displayed in human life.** God is absolutely supreme, a law unto Himself and does what He will among men. 1. *In the human body* (ver. 27). God, who built our body, can smite it with disease; acute and loathsome; torture every nerve, and render man hideous from "the sole of the foot to the crown of the head." 2. *In the human mind* (ver. 28). Mental sufferings are greater than bodily. If the mind is smitten and reason dethroned, man is down and no physician can help him up. With a healthy body, elevated desires and happy prospects, we may triumph over physical suffering. But when body and mind are tortured, how terrible! "A wounded *spirit*, who can bear?" 3. *In the social circle* (ver. 30). Wife, house and vineyard, everything most dear would be touched and taken by the curse. Sin robs of family joys and family status. Domestic comfort, reputation and property all go. Often from heights of worldly greatness, families fall to the lowest depths of degradation and distress. "For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this" (2 Chron. xxix. 9).

**II. God's power displayed in national history.** Nations are but men, governed by the providence, according to the purpose of God. He can dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. God has power. 1. *Over the possessions of nations.* "Vineyards" are planted by Him. Sheep and oxen; "the cattle on a thousand hills are His." A nation's property may be great, constantly accumulating, and apparently secure, but if unjustly gained, ungratefully held or wickedly abused, God may give it to the "enemies and thou shalt have none to rescue" (ver. 31). "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth (carrieth them away) again (Job xii. 23). 2. *Over the population of nations.* God builds up a people in number, as well as in material wealth. But "He breaketh down and it cannot be built again." Vice poisons the blood and destroys the life; war, famine and pestilence waste the inhabitants of nations. Posterity, to whom are committed the interests of commerce, the defence of the throne and the glory of our name, are often cut off by divine judgments. "I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord."

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

**III. God's power irresistible in its displays.** Israel would see their children carried captives but have "no might in their hand" to rescue them, and would pine away in sorrow (ver. 32). 1. *Powerless to resist His doings.* Power is seen in creation, sustenance and government of the world. "He is mighty in strength," the force of all forces, in heaven and earth. "Men shall speak of the *might* of thy terrible acts." "I will work and who shall *let* it" (hinder, or turn it back) Is. xliii. 13. 2. *Powerless to resist his purpose.* No man, no combination of men can prevent the fulfilment of His plan. "He is of one mind, and who can *turn* Him?" Can a pebble hinder the advancing tide? God moves on in majestic power. Nations are futile in their rage and opposition. "If he cut off and shut up (*i.e.* arrest and imprison), or gather together (call an assembly for judgment), then who can hinder Him?" (Job xi. 10). What folly to resist God. "Why dost thou strive against Him?" Has He done you harm? Can you succeed? Submit, avoid the curse and secure the blessing."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 28, 29.** *The dreadful power of suffering.* "Smite thee with madness." God's judgments reach the mind as well as body and estate, make men a terror to themselves and drive them to desperation.

*Blindness*, physical and mental, loss of sight and confounding of understanding. Unable to devise means to prevent or remove calamities, and led to adopt those which tended directly to their ruin. How true the saying, *Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat* "Those whom God wishes to destroy, he first infatuates." What a warning to nations! What an awful type of wicked men!

*Judicial Blindness.* 1. When truth is rejected. 2. Moral light intellectual and spiritual withdrawn. And 3. Moral vision entirely obscured (*cf.* Rom. xi. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 4). "They met with (run into) darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night (Job. v. 14).

**Vers. 27-34.** *Elements of Distress.*

1. Personal annoyances (ver. 27).
2. Mental derangement (ver. 28).
3. Providential reverses (a) In domestic life (ver. 30). (b) In commercial life (vers. 31-33). Distress indicating Divine agency. Divine severity.

THIRD GROUP: THE REJECTION AND DEGRADATION OF ISRAEL.—*Verses 35-46.*

We have here solemn gradation of evils. Confusion and anarchy, uniting with oppression, produce madness of heart; disease pursues its ravages in most malignant forms; labour and enterprise are blasted by the curse, and the nation sinks into total disgrace and ruin.

**I. Israel would be cut off from fellowship with God (ver. 35).** From "the sole of the foot unto the crown of the head" they would be smitten with loathsome and incurable disease, "a sore botch that cannot be healed." Leprosy cut off from the society of man, so Israel would be excluded from fellowship with God.

**II. Israel would become impoverished at home.** 1. *The fruits of the land would be consumed.* Locusts would devour the seed. They might carry much into the field, but would reap little (ver. 28); the planting and dressing of the vineyard would give no wine to drink, for the worm would devour the vine (ver. 39); the trees would yield no oil to anoint, but would be uprooted or destroyed (ver. 40). 2. *They would fall into an inferior position.* They would have to borrow money instead of lending (ver. 44); strangers would rise above them in wealth and social rank, "become the head, and they would be the tail;" their condition would be the opposite to verse 13. 3. *A curse would rest upon their children.* Children may deteriorate through sin, and carry in their persons the curse of God to future generations. "And upon thy seed for ever." Israel as a nation would be rejected, but a remnant would be saved (*cf.* Is. x. 22; vi. 13; Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5).

**III. Israel would be a terror to spectators.** "For a sign and for a wonder" (ver. 46). God's doings are not simply *wonderful*, but *signs* of supernatural interposition, illustrations of spiritual truth. Never was a people such a sign as the Jews, whose seed for thousands of years have been a wonder over the face of the earth!

**IV. Israel would be brought under subjection to a foreign Power.** 1. *They were taken into captivity* (ver. 36). Their kings—Jehoichin (2 Kings, xxiv.

12, 14), Zedekiah (2 Kings, xxv. 7, 11), and Manasseh (2 Ch. xxxiii. 11)—were taken away by foreign nations. Edward III. had the King of Scots and the King of France captives together. Monarchs with body-guards and means of protection cannot escape the vengeance of God. How hopeless that case when the defender shares the fate of the subjects! 2. *They were forced to serve other gods.* As in Babylon and in Popish countries. "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favour" (Jer. xvi. 13).

V. Israel would become a byword among nations (ver. 37). Jews have been despised among Mahometans, Pagans, and Christians. There is scarcely any part of the globe where the prediction has not been verified. "In short, the annals of almost every nation, for 1800 years, afford abundant proofs that this has been, as it still is, the case, the very name of Jew being a universally recognised term for extreme degradation and wretchedness, and is often applied by passionate people in derision—'You Jew!'" "And now am I their song; yea, I am their byword" (Job xxx. 9).

#### GOD'S CONTROL OVER NATURE.—Verses 35 and 38-42.

I. In the material department. Earth with its produce, in fields and vineyards—heaven with its sun and its showers, are under the superintendence of God and governed in the interests of men. The heavens satisfy the earth and the earth yields its increase to men; but all things in heaven and earth depend upon God. "So that without His bidding," says Calvin, "not a drop of rain falls from heaven, and the earth produces no germ, and consequently all nature would be barren, unless he gave it fertility by his blessing." "How long shall the land mourn and the herbs of every field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

II. In the intelligent department. Over the bodies and minds of men. The beauty of the one and the vigour of the other. The strength of the limb (ver. 35) and the use of reason (ver. 28) come from Him. The condition of the parents and the fate of the children are fixed by His providence (ver. 41). God directs and controls all forces and all agencies to accomplish His designs. None are beyond the reach and none can escape the punishment of God. "All troubles," says Bishop Reynolds, "have their commission and instructions from Him—what to do, whither to go, whom to touch, and whom to pass over."

#### PARENTAL DISAPPOINTMENT.—Verse 41.

I. Parents anticipate great things from children. Dutiful conduct and reverence, joy, advancement, honour and prosperity. Gratitude, needful help and preservation of family name.

II. Parents are often disappointed in their children. Sometimes cut down by early death. They often turn out badly, a curse instead of a blessing. They are taken captives by evil habits and evil company—because disloyal and unnatural. "God help me, my own children have forsaken me," said James II. who stands forth a type of a deserted father. "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 35.** Diseases. 1. Painful. 2. Degrading. 3. Incurable (*cf.* Is. i. 4-6).

**Ver. 37.** *A Proverb.* 1. A fact. 2. A dishonour. 3. A punishment. 4. A witness to prophetic truth. What a fall from the original mission of Israel. "Poets, dramatists, have all taken the Jew as the personation of what is mean, grasping, and avaricious ("Greedy as a Jew." "Avaricious as a Jew"). Yet he is not more so, intrinsically, than we are; it is circumstances that have made him so; it is persecution and ill-treatment that have crushed him. And all this is the fulfilment of prophecies old as the days of Moses, and yet not the justification of his persecutors." — *Dr.*

*Cumming.* This teaches two important lessons: *First*, he explains this severe persecution, permitted by God to fall upon them because they were set up as a model nation chosen from heathendom, enriched with privileges, glory and position. But they were untrue, forsook God; and the height of the dignity to which they were raised, is the measure of the depth of degradation to which they have sunk for abuse of it. *Secondly*, how impossible to escape the conclusion that the Book of Deuteronomy is inspired! The predictions in this chapter, and in the ensuing one, are so specific, so literal, that they carry in their own bosoms the tests of inspiration.—(*Idem*).

FOURTH GROUP: DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD RESULTING IN SERVITUDE TO MAN.  
*Verses 47-57.*

Every department of national life has been under the curse; yet, in love to His people and earnest desire to preserve them from wrath, the faithful servant of God goes further, and pictures greater severity in bondage to heathen yoke. Having forsaken God, they were left in servitude to man.

**I. If Israel would not obey God, they would be compelled to serve enemies.** "Because thou servedst not the Lord, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies" (ver. 47, 48). 1. *Serve in hunger and want.* "In hunger, thirst, nakedness and in want of all things." "Man's life," says Calvin, "is not shut up in bread, but hangs on the Sovereign will and good pleasure of God." He can withhold bread, take away water, create natural and spiritual distress in schools, churches, and nations. 2. *Serve in vigorous oppression.* "He shall put a yoke of iron about thy neck" (ver. 49). Instead of the easy yoke of God, they would be slaves to a cruel foe (*cf.* Jer. xxvii. 11, 12). Those who refuse reasonable service to God, will have to bow to the tyranny of sin.

**II. These enemies would be most barbarous and cruel.** This description might apply to the Chaldeans when compared with Moabites, Philistines and other neighbours in Judea, but the Romans answer best to it. 1. *Enemies which scorn the distant foe.* They came "from far," from France, Spain and Britain—then considered the end of the earth. 2. *Enemies which defy the strength of battlements* (ver. 52). All fortified places to which the people escaped were taken, and the walls of Jerusalem razed to the ground. 3. *Enemies which have no pity for the people.* "Not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young" (ver. 50). Josephus says the Romans had no mercy for infants and spared neither sex nor age. Cruel and insensible to human instincts. 4. *Enemies of ruthless vengeance.* "Fruit of thy cattle, fruit of thy land," all consumed. The invader destroyed everything within reach, every

district through which they passed was strewed with wrecks of devastation. 5. *Enemies of sudden approach.* Swift as an eagle—the ensign of the standards of the Roman army—pouncing violently upon its prey. It is true morally and physically that “where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

III. In their distress and siege Israel would be driven to horrible extremities (vers. 53-57). 1. *Famine would lead them to eat the fruit of their own body* (ver. 53). Fulfilled 2 Kings vi. 25, 28, 29; Lam. ii. 20; iv. 10; Baruch ii. 3; and in the Roman siege. 2. *Famine would create domestic jealousy.* The man of luxury would envy his relatives if better off than himself; or avoid them in jealousy and fear lest they should discover and demand a share of his unnatural viands. “In every house where there was any appearance of food, the dearest relatives fought each other for it—even mothers their infants.”—(Josephus). 3. *Famine would destroy natural affection.* The delicate and sensitive woman would be unrestrained by natural affection and appease her hunger with her offspring and afterbirth. In the siege of Samaria, a woman boiled her son (2 Kings v. 28, 29), which was also done in the siege by the Romans. Famine was so terrible, that “for want of all things,” the leather of girdles, shoes and shields, and even stale dung of oxen were eagerly devoured (*cf.* Ezek. v. 10; Jer. xix. 9). Such were the awful consequences of forsaking God.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow.—*Shakespeare.*

Thus woe succeeds woe, as wave a wave.—*Herrick.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 47. *Joyful Service.* I. Its Motive. God's goodness in personal mercies, family mercies, spiritual mercies. II. Its embodiment in secret and social devotion, in songs of praise, grateful offerings and loyal obedience. Here we have duty and favour, “the duty of delight,” as a modern writer would say, labour and sunshine. “The love which does not lead to labour will soon die out; and the thankfulness which does not embody itself in sacrifices is already changing to ingratitude.”

Vers. 47, 48. *The dread alternative.* God or man, with joyfulness or in want, etc.

Vers. 49-52. *Foreign conquest.* I. The foe described swift, cruel and

strong. II. The mischief he commits. III. The impotence to resist.

Ver. 52. *Confidence in strongholds.* Jews seldom ventured to fight in open fields. They trusted to *high and fenced walls*. In a special manner they confided in the strength and situation of Jerusalem, as Jebusites, former inhabitants did before them (2 Sam. v. 6, 7). Vain is the confidence of the sinner. His stronghold a refuge of lies (Is. xxviii. 15). Divine Retribution. 1. Discovers every subject. None can hide from God. 2. Overturns every stronghold. 3. Penetrates every place. “Prince's palaces are not *above*, the poor man's cottage is not *beneath* the judgment of God.” God is the only stronghold in whom we should trust. Christ is the refuge, flee to him!

#### THE GLORIOUS AND FEARFUL NAME.—*Verse 58.*

The name of Jehovah most prominent here to check the downward course, secure glory and regard. Pause and consider its nature and demands.

**I. A Name revealed in Scripture.** Not known to patriarchs, or if known not understood in its fulness and blessing (Ex. vi. 3). It was a preface to the law (Ex. xx. 2) and a special revelation to Moses (Ex. iii. 13-15; vi. 3), indicating a God faithful and self-existent, absolute being, and infinite perfection; a Name above every name, never to be uttered without reverence, the sanctity of which aggravates crime against it. It is the scriptural, the theocratic name of God.

**II. A Name written in Nature.** In letters of burning splendour in heaven above and earth beneath; "glorious" in goodness and "fearful" in power. In thunder, lightning, and earthquake we have displays of power and majesty. Men speak of laws and forces of nature; true science discerns God, and spells his name in all departments (*cf.* Ps. civ.): "For that Thy name is *near* Thy wondrous works declare" (Ps. lxxv. 1).

**III. A Name illustrated in Providence.** It has been vindicated and honoured in history—1. *In displays of power.* "Twice"—*i.e.*, again and again in his providential government of the world—"have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God" (Ps. lxii. 11). God repeats the lesson if man will only hear (Job. xxxiii. 14). 2. *In displays of judgment.* In Egypt and Babylon, in the Flood, in the destruction of Sodom and Jerusalem, God's "judgments are manifest" (Rev. xv. 4). 3. *In displays of mercy.* Mercy as well as power belongs to God (Ps. lxii. 12); mercy consonant with justice—mercy to the obedient and justice to offender. "The name of the God of Jacob (the manifested power and faithfulness of the God who saved Jacob in the day of trouble (Gen. xxxii.) defend thee (*lit.* exalt, set thee on high and in a secure place") (Ps. xx. 1). Thus have we a continual manifestation of this memorial name (Hos. xii. 5). "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations (Ex. iii. 15).

#### FIFTH GROUP: OBSTINATE REBELLION BRINGS UTTER RUIN—Verses 58-68.

These are not expressions of vindictive feeling. God delights to bless, not to curse. But they describe natural consequences of transgression. In its beginning, progress and ultimate issue fearful is rebellion—constant rebellion against God.

**I. Obstinate Rebellion increases calamities.** Sin unpardoned develops new symptoms, and as the evil grows greater miseries follow. 1. *It prolongs and intensifies those we have.* "The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, great plagues of long continuance (ver. 59)." God must rule. Afflictions are not taken away until the desired end is accomplished, verses 23, 20. 2. *It brings others upon us.* "Every plague not written will the Lord bring upon thee," ver. 61. God has infinite resources. As in the case of Job the climax is terrible. "Thou renewest thy witnesses (*marg.* plagues) against me, and increases thine indignation upon me; changes and war (successions and a host, *i.e.*, one host succeeding another) are against me" (Job. x. 17).

**II. Obstinate rebellion turns God's love into anger.** His procedure towards men is changed by their disobedience. 1. *In rejecting His people.* "As the Lord rejoiced to do good so will he rejoice to destroy, bring to nought and pluck off" (ver. 63). The loss of children, the decay of prosperity and future hope grievous. But when God withdraws His presence and providence, nothing can sustain a church or people. Awful to be forsaken of God. To have his countenance turned from us and against us in trouble—to have frowns instead of



smiles, must be hell and not heaven. "Woe also to them when I depart from them." 2. *In scattering them abroad.* "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people," etc. (ver. 64). Uprooted from Canaan, and driven to wander homeless to the ends of the earth. If no true allegiance to God, country, societies, and creeds cannot unite and secure. "The Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen. xi. 8). 3. *In reducing them to slavery.* "Ye shall be sold for bondsmen" (ver. 68). Once they marched triumphant out of Egypt, but they would return as slaves in the ships of Tyre, Sidon, and Rome (*Josephus*). Those who live in luxury often lose their liberty and become reduced to servitude—servitude disgraceful and most severe. "So they came into the land of Egypt, for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord" (Jer. xliii. 7).

III. **Obstinate rebellion endangers human life.** "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee" (ver. 66). Endangers. 1. *By grievous suffering.* Diseases of Egypt were brought upon them. Often acute *physical* disease, hideous and loathsome. Sometimes *mental* agony, sorrow of mind extinguishing the hope of life, or rendering it impossible to bear. "The days of affliction have taken hold (fast hold) upon me (as armed men besieging a city) a sad contrast to former days (Job xxx. 16). 2. *By constant risks.* There was no *assurance*, no certainty of life (ver. 66). Dangers, real and imaginary, create constant fear. Life's thread may break. Its length may be unexpected and strong, but time will cut it down. "For live how we can, yet die we must."—(*Shakspeare*.) 3. *By premature death.* Wickedness shortens life. "The evil that men do," as well as the good, "lives after them." "Deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Ps. lv. 23). Sin by its own nature and the righteous judgments of God upon it, bring men to untimely ends; but piety contributes to the length and enjoyment of life. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27). Sinner, stop lest thy sin rise to presumption and forbearance end in certain death! "Neither be thou foolish; why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (Ecc. vii. 17).

IV. **Obstinate rebellion destroys all remedy.** Wilful opposition to the word of God leads to judicial blindness and destruction. When God abhors, he will soon abandon. Mighty population, regal sovereignty, military prowess and national prestige will be smitten like a flower. No remedy, no security against the judgment of God but submission. That kingdom is strongest, most splendid, and most secure which makes God its sovereign. Otherwise hated, forsaken, cast away! Divorced from God, forsaken of God. "I will love them no more."

Heaven gives the needful, but neglected call.

What day, what hour, but knocks at human hearts,

To wake the soul to sense of future scenes.

—Young.

### GOD-FORSAKEN LIFE.—Verses 63-68.

When God withdraws, nothing can sustain a church or nation. When the ark of God was taken Ichabod was pronounced. Present affections only foreshadow future judgments. "Woe also to them when I depart from them."

I. **A life of bitterness and sorrow.** 1. Bitterness in mind and heart. Conscience stings and fears alarm. Sin is bitterness and gall. Lord Byron declared that his days were "in the yellow leaf," the flowers and the fruits were gone, "the worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone." 2. Bitterness in condition and prospect. Without ease, peace and comfort now (ver. 65) and nothing

better in the future. "I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope," said the poet Burns, in dying hours.

**II. A life of bondage and misery.** Bondage to lust, evil habits, and fear of death. Misery is ever linked to sin; like a scorpion, vice brings its own torment (Rev. ix. 5). Whatever the sinner does, he finds no relief. "Which way I move is hell, myself am hell," Milton makes Satan say. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart."

**III. A life excluded from God's Inheritance.** "Plucked off the land" and driven into captivity and death. Sin drove man from Eden, and idolatry the Jews from Canaan; so unbelief and rebellion will exclude from heaven. Sinners cannot enter the kingdom of God on earth, and will be disinherited at last. What a warning to all in the bosom of the Church and under the sound of the Gospel! How sad a godless life! "I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, 'Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'" (Deut. xxxi. 17).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 58. The Divine Name**—1. In its glorious nature: "glorious and fearful." 2. In its covenant relation: "the Lord thy God." 3. In its requirements upon life: "that thou mayest fear." *The duty of fearing God.* I. What God requires of us. That we regard him (1) with reverential awe; (2) with obedient love; (3) with undivided attachment. II. What we must expect at his hands if we comply not with his requisition; our plagues also shall be wonderful (ver. 59)—(1) here; (2) hereafter.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

**Vers. 59–64. Great evils.** 1. Smitten by the judgment of God with sickness severe, long and increasing (vers. 59–62). 2. Rejected in the covenant of God (ver. 63). "Greatly as the sin of man troubles God, and little as the pleasure may be which he has in the death of the wicked, yet the holiness of his love demands the punishment and destruction of those who despise the riches of his goodness and long-suffering; so that he displays his glory in the judgment of the wicked no less than in blessing and prospering the righteous" (*Keil*). 3. Scattered by

the providence of God (ver. 64). 4. Forced to reject the worship of God. "Thou shalt serve other gods" (ver. 64)—lifeless, senseless gods, which hear not prayer nor deliver from distress.

"When sorrows come  
They come not single spies  
But in battalions."

**Ver. 63.** Great must be wickedness which provokes God to reject and hate His people. Notice, 1. *Exclusion from the blessings of the covenant.* Driven from the house of God, loss of outward privileges and position. God deprives sinful nations of prestige and position, removes their candlestick for ingratitude, and casts them off for wickedness. 2. *Uprooted from the land.* God plants and uproots. He can overturn a people as well as pluck up a tree. Nations may have flourishing trade and nobility grand mottoes, but God can destroy their prosperity root and branch; leave them without power to revive inwardly or outwardly. We cannot flourish without God. "He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living" (Ps. lii. 5).

## NO REPOSE IN A GODLESS LIFE.—Verse 65.

When Israel forsook God He forsook them. The predictions were fulfilled, and they were worse than fugitives and vagabonds in the earth, without settlement and ease. There is no repose in a Godless life.

**I.** This truth is illustrated in Jewish history. The Jews have been driven from land to land; from Russia, Poland and Spain. For 1800 years or more, they have been homeless, restless, and wretched—a byword and a proverb.

**II.** This truth is confirmed by experience. God is the centre of rest, the fountain of bliss, and away from Him we can never find peace. "Thou madest us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in thee" (*Augustine*).

1. *The ungodly find no satisfaction in sin.* Sin is disorder, disease, and creates dissatisfaction, bitterness, and anguish. Lord Chesterfield "run the silly rounds of pleasure," but had "no wish to repeat the nauseous dose." There is no peace to the wicked; their hearts are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Is. lvii. 20, 21). 2. *The ungodly find no comfort in affliction.* They are full of fear and of "tossings to and fro." Distracted with anxiety, accused by conscience and tormented with guilt, they have restless nights and wearisome days. Sleep, the gift of God, and "tired nature's sweet restorer," never refreshes them. Phantoms of horror terrified Tiberius and Caracalla, and fearful visions murdered the rest of Nero. "When I say, my bed shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams and terriest me with visions" (Job vii. 4, 13). 3. *The ungodly have no hope in death.* "No ease" nor foundation "for the sole of the foot" on the rock. Solon's maxim not far wrong—"Call no man happy till death." Whatever life may be, "What is the hope of the hypocrite (godless person), though he hath gained, when God takes away (cuts off, 6, 9; Is. xxxviii. 12) his soul?" (Job xxvii. 8). There is rest in Christ, hope in the Gospel. Come and believe—"Ye shall find rest."

Who builds on less than an immortal base,  
Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death.

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 65. *Triple sorrows.* 1. *A trembling heart*, as opposed to a fixed and courageous heart. A heart without dread of detection, disgrace and punishment. "Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful."—(*Shakspeare*). 2. *Failing of eyes.* Weary of darkness and light, day and night a terror. When the eyes of the soul are put out, the spiritual universe is midnight and despair. "The eyes of the wicked shall fail." 3. *Sorrow of mind.* Mental agony depriving of rest, affecting health and spirits. "Full of scorpions is my mind."—(*Shakspeare*).

Better be with the dead  
Than in the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy.—*Shakspeare*.

Ver. 66. *Life in suspense.* "Hang in doubt, *lit.* "thy life shall be hanging before thee, *i.e.* shall be hanging as it were on a thread, and that before thine eyes."—(*Speak. Com.*) This might be taken as a *warning*. (The sword of Damocles). Take it as a fact. 1. Because naturally uncertain. 2. Because constantly endangered. Risks through guilt, disease, enemies, and divine judgments. Take warning, the thread may be cut any moment. What indifference? "Though death be before the old man's face it may be behind the young man's back."—(*Seneca*). Serious things to-morrow cost Caesar and Archias their lives.



**Ver. 67.** *A sad picture of a weary life.* Deprived of comfort—of physical health and mental vigour under the curse of God. Such a life intolerable. "I loathe it" (Job vii. 16). Let us learn from this chapter that our supreme interest is to cultivate the friendship

and obey the word of God. Then blessings and not curses! Blessings here, blessings for ever!

Well may your hearts believe the truths I tell;  
'Tis virtue makes the bliss where'er we dwell.  
—Collins.

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXVIII.

**Vers. 1-6.** *Prosperity.* Some years ago, when preaching at Bristol, among other notes I received to pray for individuals, one was this—"A person earnestly desires the prayers of this congregation, who is prospering in trade." "Ah!" said I to myself, here is a man who knows something of his own heart; here is a man who has read the scriptures to some purpose."—*Jay*.

**Vers. 7-10.** *Blessing upon thee.* God gives us what we have, not so much that we may have it, but that we may do good. Everything in life, even the best earned rewards, are seeds sown for a future harvest.—*Bengel*. **Ver. 9.** *Keep.* The virtue of Paganism was strength; the virtue of Christianity is obedience.—*Hare*.

**Ver. 13.** *Above.* As long as time endureth there will be distinction of rank, not simply for the weal of the great, but for the economy and safety of the world.—(*E. Davies*). True elevation does not consist in the elevation of nature, in the material or exterior hierarchy of beings. True elevation, an elevation essential and eternal, is one of merit, one of virtue. Birth, fortune, genius, are nothing before God.—*Lacordaire*.

**Vers. 28, 29.** *Madness* is the last stage of human degradation. It is the abdication of humanity. Better to die a thousand times.—*Napoleon I.*

**Ver. 30.** *House.* If men lived like men indeed, their houses would be temples—temples which we should hardly dare to injure, and in which

it would make us holy to live.—*Ruskin*.

**Ver. 31.** *Rescue.* As the net does not spring up without catching the bird, can ye imagine that when destruction passes by, ye will not be seized by it, but will escape without injury.—*Hitzig*.

**Ver. 34.** *Mad for sight.* A man in great misery may so far lose his measure as to think a minute an hour.—*Locke*.

**Ver. 36.** *King.* The lot of a de-throned king, who was born a king and nothing more, must be dreadful. The pomp of the throne, the gewgaws which surround him from his cradle, which accompany him step by step throughout life, become a necessary condition of his existence.—*Napoleon I.*

The king's name is a tower of strength,  
Which they upon the adverse party want.  
—*Shakespeare*.

**Ver. 37.** *A proverb.* Reputation is gained by many acts, but is lost by one.—(*Bacon*). It is hopeless to recover a lost reputation.—*Idem*.

The purest treasure mortal times afford  
Is spotless reputation; that away,  
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.—  
*Shakespeare*.

**Vers. 45 46.** *Wonder.*

Think not the things most wonderful  
Are those beyond our ken;  
For wonders are around the paths,  
The daily paths of men.—*Hawthorne*.

**Ver. 47.** *Joyfulness.* I have often read my duty and my sin in this verse.

Notwithstanding innumerable proofs of His munificence how deficient our songs in number, and how languid in performance! In the commonest engagements of life, and in our daily enjoyments was sweet ingredient mingled, it would really enhance the worth of everything, however otherwise inconsiderable.—*Dr. W. Hamilton.*

Vers. 53-57. *Eat.* During a famine in Italy A.D. 450, parents ate their children. Eaters of human flesh—(*Anthrophagi*)—have existed in all ages.

Famine has a sharp and meagre face.  
'Tis death in an undress of skin and bone.—*Dryden.*

Ver. 58. *Fear.* Disobedience is the beginning of evil, and the broad way to ruin.—*D. Davies.*

Return, my senses range no more abroad,  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.—*Parnell.*

Vers. 59-61. *Long continuance.*

One woe doth tread upon another's heel  
So fast they follow.  
—*Shakespeare.*

Thus woe succeeds woe, as wave a wave,  
—*Herrick.*

Ver. 63. *Rejoice to destroy.* The wrath of man is the rage of man; but the wrath of God is the reason of God.  
—*Bp. Reynolds.*

Not thou, O Lord, from us, but we  
Withdraw ourselves from thee.  
—*French.*

Ver. 66. *Hang.* My life hangs by a single thread; but that thread is in a Father's hand.—*J. H. Evans.*

## CHAPTER XXIX.

**CRITICAL NOTES.**—The discourse is continued—the subject of that is the covenant of Israel with God—its privileges conferred and obligations imposed. *Besides* (ver. 1), not a new covenant, but repetition, renewal of the old at a suitable time.

2-9. Obligation to obey on account of what God had done for Israel. All Israel. Represented by Elders (*cf.* ver. 10). Temptations. Testings, provings (*cf.* iv. 34; vii. 19). Not given. They felt no want and did not ask. This complaint not to excuse weakness, but to direct them in right course. I (ver. 5). Jehovah introduced as speaking. Clothes and shoes preserved classified with the gift of manna, therefore better understood, not as a natural supply from flocks and herds, but as a miraculous act. Know (ver. 6). Practical knowledge of God, design of this goodness, ver. 7; *cf.* ii. 32; iii. 1; ver. 8; *cf.* iii. 12, 13. 9. Prosper. Lit, act wisely (xxxii. 29; Jos. i. 7; 1 K. ii. 3. "The connexion of wisdom in conduct and prosperity in circumstances is noteworthy" (*Sp. Com.*).

10-15. Summons to enter the covenant afresh that they may really be God's people. Your tribes, lit. your captains, your tribes, your elders, etc. The word "tribes" apparently denotes all not in office. All were represented if not present. Stranger represents all foreign servants bought with money (Ex. xii. 44) or taken in war. Little ones represented by parents or guardians. Menial servants not excluded. None exempt from the terms of national covenant, which embraced not only those living, but posterity (ver. 14).

16-29. Once more denouncing rejection in case of apostasy, or breach of covenant. Ver 16, 17 not parenthetic as in the A.V. Ver. 18 stands in close connection not with ver. 15, but with what immediately precedes. The people are reminded (vers. 16, 17) of what they had witnessed in Egypt and on the journey, of the vileness of idolatry, and that experience is urged (ver. 18) as a motive for shunning that heinous sin (*Sp. Com.*) Idols (ver. 17), lit. idols or stocks which can be rolled about (Lev. xxvi. 30). Ver. 18. Root, a picture of destructive fruit of idolatry. Gall, hemlock (Hos. x. 4; Am. vi. 12), Wormwood (Jer. ix. 15; Lam. iii. 19), both terms indicate distress and trouble resulting from sin; ver. 19, bless, congratulate himself; imagination, lit. in firmness, hardness of my heart (from Hebrew word, to twist together, to be tough or firm). Add, a proverbial expression, rather difficult, denoting the addition of indulgence and sin to the desire, or that the drunken lead astray others who have only desire."

**20-21.** Such cannot escape God's anger, which, like smoke, breaks forth in fire (Ps. lxxiv. 1) ; blots out (ch. ix. 14, xxv. 19, Ex. xvii. 14).

**22-23.** Effects of sin would blast the once rich and flourishing region ; future generations astonished would ask the meaning of this devastation (ver. 24), and would receive the reply, the strokes of God had smitten the land and its inhabitants. Ver. 29 expresses humble submission and solemn warning. Secret, hidden things belong to God, counsels and purposes concerning nations, reasons of his dealings with them, together with time and methods, &c. ; revealed injunctions, threatenings, and promises are things with which we have to do which we should teach our children.

### SPIRITUAL DULNESS.—*Verses 1-9.*

God had done marvellous things for Israel, yet they were unchanged and disobedient ; insensible to miracle and unable to discern the purpose of God in his dealings with them.

**I. God performs striking events in man's history.** Israel's history was eventful from beginning to end. 1. *Wonderful deliverance.* Egypt was plagued, they were set free ; some were smitten, they were preserved. "I gave people for thy life." 2. *Continual guidance.* They knew not, could never have discovered the way, but they were not lost. "I have led you" (ver. 5). God guides in the residence, journeys, and enterprises of life. 3. *Daily support* (vers. 5 and 6). Food and raiment. Their little stock, increased by Egyptian gifts and the spoils of Amalekites, by a distinguished act of grace was preserved for forty years. 4. *Victory over enemies* (ver. 7). So now God delivers from fear, temptations, and persecutors. 5. *Acquisition of inheritance* (ver. 9). Land taken from their enemies to enrich them. "Land is a part of God's estate in the globe ; and when a parcel of ground is deeded to you, and you walk over it, it seems as if you had come into partnership with the original Proprietor of the earth."—*H. W. Beecher.*

**II. These striking events reveal God to men.** "That ye might know that I am the Lord your God" (ver. 6). They manifest God, and are designed to educate and train us to obedience. 1. *In terrible judgments.* "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." 2. *In signal mercies.* God bestows favours to lead us to repentance and faith. Turn from speculations to facts. Our life is not shaped by fate, nor directed by chance. It is crowded with mercies and judgments—events which reveal the hand of God, illustrate the blessing of obedience and the danger of sin.

**III. Men do not always understand these events.** Israel had not "a heart to perceive and eyes to see," notwithstanding their wonderful history and varied experience. How does this happen ? 1. *Because they are thoughtless.* We must think, to feel—seek, to know. We can never comprehend without thought, nor discern God without meditation. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out by them that have pleasure therein." 2. *Because they are alienated in feeling.* If we take no interest in a person, we do not wish to know and serve him. If our hearts are alienated from God, we are blind to his manifestations in nature. We lose power "to retain God in knowledge" (Rom. i. 28), become void, spiritually stupid, whatever our boasted science and philosophy. 3. *Because judicially blind.* Neglect or abuse any faculty, it is taken away. Shut your eyes and you cannot see, close your hearts and you cannot feel. Vision without perception, hearing without instruction, is the result of sin and the appointment of God. "Go unto this people and say—Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," etc. (Is. vi. 9 ; Acts xxviii. 24, 27).



IV. When men will not understand these striking events they are guilty. No excuse whatever. There was no want of evidence and no lack of instruction. They could not say let God speak louder, fuller, or oftener. Every form of lesson, in every available method, was given. 1. *The events are revealed to the senses.* Israel saw the destruction of their enemies. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire—the glory of God were *visible*. But nothing will touch the heart if the eyes are closed. “Unto thee it was shewed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God.” 2. *The events are interpreted by God’s Word.* Newspapers are needful, but an intimate acquaintance with scripture will help to solve the problems and discover the meaning of life. Providence and scripture are pages of the same volume, one expounds what the other performs. “Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord and read” (Is. xxxiv. 16). 3. *The events may be understood by prayer.* God teaches when we apply to Him—gives knowledge and wisdom to those who lack and seek (Jas. i. 5-7). In this school did Joseph and David get their learning. If dull, God will teach us, and “who teacheth like him?” So patiently, so gratuitously and so efficiently. His lessons are grandest in their nature and most vital in their interests. Let us listen and learn; let us see and understand. If we close our eyes to the wonders of life and our hearts to the appeals of the gospel we may be given up to spiritual hardness and helplessness. “Make the heart of this people fat, etc.”

#### MEN’S BLINDNESS IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.—Verse 4.

Consider this complaint—

I. As uttered by Moses against the people of his charge. They had “seen” with their bodily eyes all the wonders that had been wrought for them. They understood not. 1. The true character of that dispensation. 2. The obligations which it entailed upon them.

II. As applicable to ourselves at this day. 1. By the great mass of nominal Christians the nature of the gospel is very indistinctly seen. 2. The effects of it are very partially experienced. Address—(1.) Those who are altogether blind. (2.) Those who think they see. (3.) Those whose eyes God has opened.—C. Simeon, M.A.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Renewed covenant.* 1. This needful for us. (1.) When its conditions are violated. (2.) When placed in fit circumstances. Israel in Horeb and about to enter the land. (3.) When leaders are taken by death. Moses, about to die, anxious to expound and enforce the law, urges to obedience. 2. This displays God’s goodness to us. Deep concern, continual watchfulness and activity, repetition of instruction and grief at unbelief. “O that there was such a heart in them” (Ch. v. 29).

Ver. 3. Divine methods of human training. Elements of education in

human life. *Temptations*, trials to teach dependence and strengthen faith. *Signs* which discover law and reveal God’s presence. *Miracles*, indicative of supernatural power to control events and impress the heart. But *insight* is required to receive and practice the lesson. Be “men who understand the times.”

Ver. 4. *A great danger.* Lest the great things of this life blind men to spiritual interests and spiritual peril. Thus become a bait by which they are caught and destroyed (Rom. xi. 8). “Unwillingness to see is punished by incapacity of seeing. The natural

punishment to spiritual perversity is spiritual blindness." This explains the indifference of many who constantly hear and constantly reject the gospel—is a mark of God's anger and a foretaste of more terrible punishment. What God has inflicted God alone can remove. None can open the eyes of the blind but He who has closed them.

Ver. 5. *Clothes.* Not the worse for wearing, but grew as their bodies did, some think. They needed not to trouble themselves with those anxious thoughts of heathens, what they should eat, drink, or put on. Never was

prince served and supplied in such state as these Israelites were.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 6. From this verse we learn that during their desert journeys of forty years the Israelites abstained from *all* kinds of *yayin* and *shaker*, unfermented and fermented, innocent and inebriating. Hence those "do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures," who either deride abstinence as a novelty, or condemn it as an impracticable or dangerous habit of life.—*Temp. Com.*

#### SUMMONS TO RENEWED CONSECRATION.—*Verses 10-15.*

Israel urged to enter into covenant again. This implies two contracting parties. Hence God is present, and they stand before Him in representative capacity.

I. This consecration is urgent. "This day." A day of solemn events and remembrances; of self-examination and pressing duties; of high hope and inspiring enterprise. Life has its bright and dark days. Its friendships, trials, and obligations. There should be no delay. This very hour is "big with life's futurities." Procrastination may ruin.

II. This consecration is representative. All were summoned to attend. Leaders, "captains of tribes," elders and officers, must set an example, and think it no dishonour to renew their covenant with God. Women and children must not be forgotten, but numbered with those present. Little ones are fit to be joined in covenant to the Lord. Strangers as well as sons of Israel; servants as well as free men; those absent and those present, posterity for generations to come—all concerned. This an indication of favour to Gentiles, a type of the covenant of grace. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

III. This consecration will exalt and establish the nation. "That he may establish thee to-day" ver. 13. 1. By *restoring* to God. "A people unto Himself" to fear, love and obey Him. "Be unto thee a God," according to his promise and purpose. This personal relationship is most needful, specially delightful to God, and constantly set forth in Deuteronomy. 2. By *creating a sense of obligation to God.* In covenant we pledge ourselves to remember God and cherish a sense of duty. We forget obligation, require deeper feeling and renewed devotion. Personal faith in God and national dependence upon Him are stronger than iron ships and granite walls. Without these we have no superiority, no permanency, no power to establish and preserve a church or a people. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 10. *Stand.* As subjects to swear allegiance—an assembly to worship—an army to fight. A solemn and noble position!

"They also serve who stand and wait."

*God examining man.* "This day"—a day of thankfulness, regrets, interesting recollections, uncertainty, anticipation. The position indicated implies:—I. That we depend upon God's bounty. II. That we are continually open to His inspection. III. That our future destiny is in His hands. Application—Let us this day stand before the Lord. 1. Humble penitents. 2. Sincere believers. 3. Faithful servants.—*Bib. Museum.*

Ver. 12. *Enter into covenant.* More than repeating it, coming near to it or mere profession of it. Entire, real entrance, sharing its benefits and going into its obligations. "The expression is very remarkable. It is one of those proofs of the exceeding greatness of the love and condescension of God, which are so often found in the Bible. He might command simply and tell the creature. The obligation of that command is on you, whether you like it or not. But he asks man freely to accept what eternally is his duty, to enter into covenant with him; that is, openly to accept his service, that he may bless us."—(*Cumming.*)

DANGERS TO BE SHUNNED.—*Verses 16-21.*

Moses now warns against breaking the covenant into which they have entered; he describes the fearful results of apostasy.

I. Idolatry with its abominations. Their experience should have taught them how worthless, how helpless idols were in Egypt and on the march to Canaan. 1. *Abominations which were prevalent.* Egypt was addicted to such evils, and many were tainted through dwelling there. 2. *Abominations which were fascinating.* "Ye have seen abominations" in other nations; still hanker after them, and are almost drawn away. "Idols of wood and stone, silver and gold," are more attractive than the invisible God. If the lessons of experience were treasured up and utilised, we should avoid many dangers. "Experience is an excellent schoolmaster."—*Carlyle.*

II. Apostasy with its evils. "Lest there should be among you man or woman," &c. (ver. 18). 1. *Apostasy beginning with individuals.* The lump is what its particles are, the nation as its individuals. Personal influence and character affect the community. "The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it" (*J. S. Mill*). "One sinner destroyeth much good." 2. *Apostasy bitter in results.* "A root that beareth gall and wormwood"—a root deeply planted, firmly strengthened, and mischievously productive; quick in growth and stupifying in nature. Sin, like poison, destroys the life of a nation. The bread of idolatry, sweet in the mouth, becomes bitter in the experience: what is pleasant in the taste convulses the system with pain. Its riches will sicken, turn to moral poison, "and he shall vomit them up again" (Job xx. 14-16).

III. Presumption with its risks. "And it come to pass that he bless himself" (ver. 19). This supposes that one may think himself secure, even amidst danger; promise impunity though persisting in impiety; daring presumption, an affront to God and a certain ruin! 1. *The method of presumption.* (a) False promises. "I shall have peace," when there is no peace. (b) Intense blindness. He blesses himself, when the words of the curse are thundering in his ear.



(c) Abominable wickedness. Walking in the imagination of his own heart, when God urges obedience to his commands. Indulging in lust, "adding drunkenness to thirst" and sin to sin. 2. *The consequences of presumption.* "The Lord will not spare him" (ver. 20). He will be detected, arraigned, and convicted; escape is impossible. He will be—(a) Exposed to divine retribution, "the anger of the Lord," &c.; (b) Shut out from covenant blessings (ver. 21); (c) Unforgiven in offence; (d) Forgotten in existence. No perpetuation of name, no posterity to succeed him. "According to all the curses written in the book" (ver. 21). The covenant has *curses* as well as blessings: God is *just* as well as gracious. If we presume upon good when indulging in sin, we shall be awfully deceived. "He that presumes steps into the throne of God" (*Dr. South*). "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

### THE IMPIOUS BOASTER.—Verse 19.

**I. Boasting in abominable wickedness.** Glorying in shame. 1. *Walking in a course of self-indulgence.* 2. *Enticing others by his example.* Asserting their security, and leading others to think as they do. "They say still unto them that despise Me the Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." Jer. xxiii. 17.

**II. Boasting with resolute purpose.** "I walk in the firmness (hardness) of my heart"—sin hardens by its deceitfulness and continuance. The "conscience is seared" (branded as with a hot iron) by burning lusts, 1 Tim. iv. 2. The heart is obdurate and unmoved by warnings and curses. "Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

**III. Boasting ending in utter ruin.** Men rejoice in iniquity. "All such rejoicing is evil," most fatal. There is no evasion, no escape. "The Lord will not spare him." "All the curses shall lie upon him."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16, 17. *Ye know, &c. The discipline of experience.* Precepts and instruction useful but practical wisdom only learnt in the school of experience. Israel were taught valuable lessons in Egypt and the wilderness. Have we learned courage and confidence in conflicts and victories? What have we gained in discipline of heart and mind? "Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law."

Ver. 18. *The heart turned.* 1. Apostasy in its origin "the heart." "An evil heart of unbelief." 2. Apostasy in its results—(a). Turning away from God. (b). Joining idols. God admits of no rival. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

*Wormwood.* Sin a bitter root, bear-

ing deadly fruit as in Achan, Jos. vii. 25, and in those who turned to idols and seduced others. The apostle alluding to this text says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God (fall short), lest any *root of bitterness* springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Heb. xii. 15.

Ver. 19. *Danger of carnal security.* I. The astonishing delusion of sinners. On every side we behold—1. Their fearlessness; 2. Their self-complacency. 3. Their confidence. II. Their awful doom. 1. Infallibly certain. 2. Inexpressibly severe. Learn (1.) To compassionate the ungodly world. (2.) To be on our guard against being influenced by its advice. (3.) To be thankful if God has made us to differ from it.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

WARNINGS TO POSTERITY.—*Verses 22-28.*

When punishment comes upon them for wickedness, all thoughtful people around them will be convinced of the righteous judgments of God in the fulfilment of His word.

**I. Posterity influenced by present conduct.** The nation is organic—one whole community. In the covenant, those present represented those absent. So future generations share in our privileges, reap the consequences of our decisions and sins. 1. *The land may be affected.* Canaan was afflicted with “plagues and sicknesses,” consumed with fire, and overthrown like Sodom. The garden of the Lord was turned into desolation and waste. The sterility of Palestine is the stranger’s wonder (Volney’s “*Ruins*”), and a historic witness and warning to nations. “He turneth . . . a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein” (Ps. cvii. 33, 34). 2. *The people may be affected.* “Rooted out and cast into other lands” (ver. 28). Our children will be better or worse, upset or confirmed in virtue, by our moral conduct. Physical features are characteristic of races: so moral features are stamped upon descendants. Calculate upon remote results. “Generations to come” may be astonished, afflicted, and cursed by our actions. “The evil that men do,” as well as the good, “lives after them.” “Thou recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them.”

**II. Posterity so concerned will enquire into the reasons.** The condition of the nation the reverse of what it had been—read in the light of history and prophecy the change astonishing. Hence the question, “Wherefore?” (ver. 24). God has reasons for retribution. These reasons may be known from His word, when known they should check our wickedness. Learn: 1. *The natural connection between suffering and sin.* They forsook God and served idols (ver. 25), sins are reproduced in posterity, bound by an indissoluble chain of causation to the future. To-day’s actions are the result of yesterday’s, and the cause of future conditions. 2. *The visible proof of this connection in providential history.* Divine retribution manifest the sins of nations and the judgment of God upon them. The sterility of Palestine explains the broken covenant. Its barren hills and mute appeal—its awful silence and impressive scenes, utter the curse of God and turn spectators into enquiring penitents. “The curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him” (Dan. ix. 11, 13, 14; cf. 1 Kings ix. 8, 9; Jer. xxii. 8, 9).

NATIONAL DEFECTION AND GRIEVOUS RETRIBUTION.—*Verses 22-28.*

**I. National defection.** “They have forsaken the covenant,” etc. (ver. 25). 1. *Springing from individual sin* (ver. 18). Nations live, act, and decay through individuals. Do not overlook the parts in the whole, the one in the millions. “Individuality is the root of everything, good or evil.” 2. *Manifest in universal apostasy.* “They went and served other gods” (ver. 26). The grand object of Israel was forgotten, and its privileges were bartered away. “Gods whom they knew not,” and to whom they were under no obligation, were served instead of the true God—the God of their fathers to whom they owed everything they possessed. “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory (Jehovah the glory of Israel, Ps. cvi. 20; Rom. i. 23) for that which doth not profit (idols, ver. 8) Jer. ii. 11.

**II. Greivous retribution.** Nations rise to power and influence, fall into sin and suffer decay. Rome, after the prevalence of luxury, pride and cruelty. Spain, after persecution of truth and exclusion of the Bible. Egypt, once a powerful empire, ultimately "the basest of kingdoms" for its idolatry.

1. *Retribution extensive.* In the whole land. 2. *Retribution terrible.* Anger of God kindled, the people uprooted, cast out and suffered great indignation. 3. *Retribution complete.* Land neither sown nor fruitful, stricken and accursed. The people idolatrous, homeless and rejected. The Jews forsook Jehovah, defied His providential arrangements and brought eternal blight upon a land "flowing with milk and honey."

"Such acts  
Of contumacy will provoke the Highest  
To make death in us live."—Milton.

### DIVINE SECRETS.—Deut. xxix. 29.

This passage suggests

**I. That there are in the universe certain domains accessible to none but God.** This passage holds true. First—*In reference to material creation.* There are secrets which Nature has not whispered in the ear of her most ardent lovers. Second—*In reference to the decrees of Providence.* Cross-providences, etc. "Clouds and darkness are round about him." Social inequalities, etc. Third—*In reference to the mysteries of redemption.* "Great is the mystery, etc." "The angels desire to look into these things."

**II. That impenetrable secrecy is compatible with paternal benevolence.** All nature proves this. Family mercies prove this. Never make God's secrets a plea for neglecting His bounties.

**III. That divine secrecy is no argument for human disobedience.** "Those things which are revealed belong unto us." Here we have three ideas. First—*An acknowledgment of a Divine revelation.* Second—*The confession of our relationship to God.* He has given us laws, etc. Third—*An implication of our power to obey the Divine requirements.* The "revealed" things "belong unto us, for obedience," etc.

**IV. That inquisitiveness into secret things is a fruitful cause of scepticism.** Man will pry into the forbidden. One kind of inquisitiveness (Eve's) has inflicted fatal misery on millions! Let us leave God to deal with His own decrees, to manage the boundless realm of causes, and to work out His inconceivable purposes. It is right that there should be subjects above our comprehension, could we comprehend all, we should be gods and not men.

Brethren! Seek not to penetrate the secret recesses of God's tabernacle. "Who can by searching, find out God?" He has permitted us to enter the antechamber. Let us learn to reverence, to labour, and to wait. In due time the King will admit us further. We shall be taken to higher altitudes, and

"There we shall see His face.  
And never, never sin."

Dr. J. Parker.

### SECRET THINGS.—Verse 29.

This seems to be an answer to a question which the people might naturally put after some threatenings. After all miracles, mercies, and corrections, shall we be so wicked as to provoke God to destroy us? Will our posterity become



so profligate as to bring upon themselves such unexampled calamities? Moses replies, "The secret, therefore." Such events are hidden in future. You know enough to avoid punishment and secure favour. Render present obedience and busy not yourselves about things beyond your knowledge.

**I. That there are things revealed which we know and ought to practice.** "The things which are revealed belong to us." 1. *Truths to be received.* Truths concerning God, man, Jesus Christ—doctrines to create wonder and admiration, to excite joy and stimulate study. 2. *Duties to be performed.* Duties to God, ourselves and our neighbours—duties which make life easy and happy, which solve doubt and please God when performed. If this will not satisfy, curiosity would disquiet, if we had the powers and capacities of angels.

**II. That there are things which cannot be discovered and should not engage our attention.** "Secret things." Mysteries of nature, events of providence, and circumstances of social and individual life which puzzle the wisest. We are finite in capacity and only know in part. The unknown is a universe of endless wonders, the revelations of which are in the wise keeping of God. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me." The first lesson Pythagoras taught was silence. We must restrain curiosity and check pride. Act our part and not speculate. For "he giveth not account of any of his matters." "How unsearchable are his judgments (decisions), and his ways (modes of executing), past finding out (undiscoverable) Rom. xi. 33.

**III. That our welfare is secured only by practising things which are revealed.** "That ye may do." Revelation is given, not to indulge curiosity, but to provide a remedy for our blindness and misery. Light enough to make faith rational, duty plain, and unbelief without excuse. "Were the curtain lifted further from holy mysteries, man would be lost in hopeless bewilderment" (*Hare*). "Things revealed" should be the precious portion "for us and for our children." To believe and obey here will be our preparation and safety for that world in which we shall know as also we are known."

Thy God hath said 'tis good for thee  
To walk by faith and not by sight.  
Take it on trust a little while,  
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right,  
In the bright sunshine of His smile.—*Kemble*.

#### THE ADVANTAGES OF SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Consider—I. That there is a limit with respect to our knowledge of God and of Divine things. There is much mystery with regard—1. Doctrines. 2. Promises; 3. Divine Dispensations. II. That within the boundary of that limit there is much with which we can and ought to be acquainted; "the things which are revealed, etc."—Consider—1. Where the revelation of these things is to be formed; 2. Of which it consists; 3. For whose advantage it was given. III. That the experimental knowledge of that which is attainable will be accompanied with practical results.—*E. Tottenham, M.A.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 22-28. 1. The cursed land. 2. The disinherited people. 3. The stranger's wonder. 4. The solemn warning. "Thus the law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and rooted out of the Lord's land; but

the grace of Christ towards penitent believing sinners plants them again upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up, being kept by the power of God (Amos, 9, 15).—*Ainsworth*.

Ver. 26. *God the portion of His people.* "Whom he had, &c," Heb., signifies portion, lot, and may be rendered, "There was no portion to them: that is, the gods they served could neither supply their wants nor save their souls; they were no portion" (*A. Clarke*). A contrast to Jehovah.

Ver. 28. *Cast them with a violence, with a vengeance*;—in the Hebrew word *cast* hath an extraordinary great letter:—sling them out as out of a sling (1 Sam. 25, 29).—*Trapp*.

Ver. 29. Learn 1. God's ways are not comprehended by His short-sighted creatures. 2. God is not bound to explain His ways to any of His creatures. 3. God gives means to instruct His creatures in things needful. Therefore cease to strive and cavil; learn

to submit, trust solely. *Secret things.* God hath three sorts of secrets; first, the secret of His counsel and decrees; secondly, the secrets of His providence and outward administrations; thirdly, the secrets of His spirit and grace. From the two former God hath locked out the holiest of men as the apostles challenge, Rom. xi. 34, and David intimates, Ps. iii. 2 (*Caryl*). The writer of *Reminiscences of Robert Hall* says I requested him to print a sermon from Deut. 29. 29. "Why, Sir, I did not reserve any notes of it; I almost forgot it. Do you remember how I treated it, Sir?" "Yes, Sir, I think I recollect. *First*, you noticed the decrees of the Divine Being; secondly, the mysteries of Christian truth; thirdly, the concerns of human life." "Aye, I remember it now, Sir; I believe you are right."

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 4. *Ears to hear.* As it is difficult to strike the right tone and key to make a deaf person hear, it was difficult to find such forms of thought and expression as would make their way into the ear of their mind.

Ver. 5. *Clothes.* Clothes are for necessity; warm clothes, for health; cleanly, for decency; lasting, for thrift; and rich, for magnificence.—*Dr. Fuller*.

Ver. 6. *Know.* He shall never want mercy who does not wanton mercy.—*W. Seeker*. To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them.—*Idem*.

Poor soul! God's goodness hath been great to thee;  
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,  
But still remember what the Lord hath done.  
—2 King Henry VI.

Vers. 10-15. *Covenant.* Consecration makes not a place sacred, but only solemnly declares it so.—*Dr. South*. Consecration is going out into the world where God Almighty is, and using every power for His glory. It is taking all advantages as trust finds

—as confidential debts owed to God. It is simply dedicating one's life, in its whole flow, to God's service.—*H. W. Beecher*.

Ver. 18. *Wormwood.* And certainly the more a man drinketh of the world the more it intoxicateth.—*Bacon*. *Our God.* No religious things can satisfy a living religious soul. Life craves life for its satisfaction; the living soul cries out for the living God.—*Dr. Allon*.

Ver. 19.—*Drunkenness to thirst.* Thirst teaches all animals to drink, but drunkenness belongs only to man.—*Fielding*.

Pleasure is good, and man for pleasure made;  
But pleasure full of glory as of joy,  
Pleasure which neither blushes nor expires.  
—*Dr. E. Young*.

Ver. 21. *Curses.* The noblest reward of nature is nature itself; and the extremest punishment of vice is vice itself.—*Ld. Bacon*.

Know then this truth, enough for man to know,  
Virtue alone is happiness below.

—*Pope*.

Vers. 23-27. *The land.* See Thomson Ld. and Bk. Volney's "Ruins of Empires," Bk. 2.

Ver. 29. *Secret things.* A cocklefish might as well attempt to bring the ocean into its little shell as a man attempt to understand the ways

of God.—*Bp. Beveridge.* In His purposes and His dispensations He is equally and perfectly independent, infinitely exalted above the supervision or direction of His creatures.—*Hodge.*

And he who waits to have his task marked out Shall die, and leave his errand unfulfilled.

—*Lowell.*

## CHAPTER XXX.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Israel were rejected and exiled on account of apostacy, but not absolutely cast off for ever. If they would return to the Lord he would turn his favour towards them again, and gather them out of dispersion.

1-3. Mind, bethink themselves, not mere recollection, but consideration of their conduct and condition. Return (ver. 2) from idolatry to the service of Jehovah; in penitence and obedience. Thy captivity, ver. 3. Not to bring back the captives, but to end distress and have mercy upon them, Job xlii. 10; Ps. lxxv. 2; Jer. xxix. 14.

4-8. Consequent upon deliverance would be the gathering of Israel from all parts into their land in greater numbers. This, partly fulfilled in Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, refers, according to some, to future restoration of Jews to Palestine. "But application is found in the spirit, not in the letter. The multiplication promised consists in realising the promise to Abraham that his seed should grow into nations (Gen. xvii. 6), i.e., not "Israel according to the flesh," but "Israel according to the spirit," whose land is not restricted to the earthly Canaan or Palestine" (*Keil*). Ver. 7, after conversion the curses resting upon them would fall upon their enemies, Gen. xii. 3. They would again return and obey, and rejoice in full privileges and covenant blessings.

11-14. Hidden literally not too wonderful, not too difficult to understand or practice *cf.* ch. xvii. 8; not too distant, in Heaven inaccessible; nor beyond the sea (Mediterranean) too far away. Go for us. Who able to fetch it? No excuse of ignorance or inability to plead. Nigh, ver. 14, in the written and authorised word; subject of common conversation and daily examination.

15-20. Moses sums up the whole in the words of ver. 15, as in ch. xi., 26, 27. Good prosperity and salvation; evil adversity and distraction (*Keil*) urges them to love the Lord, walk in his ways, and not permit themselves to be torn away into idolatry. For he, i.e., that is thy life, the condition of thy life and its prolongation in the land, viz., "to love the Lord," *cf.* Ps. xxvii. 1; John xi. 25; xvii. 3; 1 John, v. 20.

### PENITENT RETURN TO GOD.—Verses 1-7.

The threatenings of the preceding chapter would not utterly destroy Israel. The mercy of God is in store for them, rejoices against judgment and gives room for repentance. These words may be taken as a prediction or a promise. As a promise they belong to Israel and to all who repent and turn to God. Repentance is described, which is the condition of promise as:

I. Return springing from remembrance of sins. "Call to mind." Misery leads to reflection and reflection ends in self-reproach. When dreams of ambition are dissipated and conscience accuses, then the mind turns inward, preys upon itself and regret for the past ensues (Judas). "I am no longer the Great Napoleon," said the exile of St. Helena. The mind, the disposition, is changed, which leads to change of relation to God, "repentance toward God" and to amendment of life—David and the prodigal. "Remember this and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors!"



**II. Return most sincere, "With all thine heart."** (*ver 2*) No return without change of heart. Lot's wife moved slowly forward and left her heart behind. Orpah stopped short at the moment of decision. Thus many go halfway, divide the heart with the world and God. The heart must be given and made contrite. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit" were written over the bed of Augustine to remind him of sincerity in life. "Render your heart and turn unto the Lord."

**III. Return graciously encouraged.** Many blessings are mentioned to induce return. 1. They will become objects of special pity. "The Lord will have compassion, &c." (*verse 3*). 2. They will be gathered from other nations and fixed in their own land. Penitents are not only delivered from misery but restored to happiness and divine inheritance. 3. They will be increased in number (*verse 5*). Multiplication would give security and superiority. Through children joy and prosperity. 4. They will be weaned from idolatry (*verse 6*). Circumcised in heart—an inward change which sets forth sanctification and obedience of life. 5. They will be relieved from curse—curses transferred to their enemies (*verse 7*). When God undertakes for his people, opposition is vain. Omnipotence will reverse our condition, restore from ruin, and pour out blessings most abundant and complete.

#### CIRCUMCISION OF HEART—*Verse 6.*

Consider—I. The blessing to be bestowed—circumcision of heart. 1. The truths which circumcision taught, and the blessings of which it was the pledge, are the birthright of every real child of God; 2. All these blessings are communicated to every genuine member of the Christian Church through Christ. A circumcised Saviour affords a pledge of—(1) A perfect obedience on behalf of His people; (2). The putting away of the guilt of sin; (3). The personal and internal circumcision which distinguishes all the real children of God. 3. God, as sovereign, retains to Himself the application of these blessings. 4. Their extension to the seed of those who partake of this spiritual circumcision is a further illustration of God's sovereignty and benignity towards His people. II. Its immediate result: love to God. 1. The source of this love: God Himself. 2. The ground on which he lays claim to it—(1). His absolute excellencies; (2). His particular relations. 3. Its extent and intensity. We must love God with all our heart. III. Its ultimate issue; everlasting life. A life of—1. Enjoyment; 2. Activity; 3. Growth; 4. Permanency. Learn—1. The due distinction between the symbolical and spiritual; 2. The blessed character of true religion.—*J. Hill, M.A.*

I do not shame  
"To tell you what I was, since my conversion  
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am."—*Shakspeare.*

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 1, 2. Important steps; consideration—return to obedience. Description of true penitence.** 1. Return to God, in sorrow, humiliation and confidence. 2. As our God to whom we owe personal allegiance and whom we are resolved to obey universally and heartily in future. "Behold we come unto Thee; for thou art the Lord our God." (*Jer. iii. 22.*)

**Ver. 1, 7. Learn—1. Repentance** is needful to be restored to God's favour. 2. Repentance prevails with God to show mercy. 3. Repentance is open to the most distant and degraded sinner. 4. Repentance is the gift of God. He works in the mind, seeks out the lost, and exalted Jesus to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel (*Acts v. 31*). "Repent ye

therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Ver. 2, 3. *Return, &c.* I. *Attitude indicated.* Inattention to God's character, word and claims. The *back* is upon God and not the face (Jer. ii. 27). 2. Criminal negligence. Like a servant who disobeys orders, pays no regard to your command and keeps his back turned upon you (Jer. xxxii. 33.) 3. Obstinate disobedience. Men always active and represented in scripture as *walking* in some way. Wicked walk "in the way of their heart, contrary to God." II. *Reasons for changing this*

*attitude.* "Shalt return, &c." 1. God worthy—in himself: "the Lord" self-existent, the centre and source of excellence. In his relation to us "the Lord thy God," to dignify and enrich. "My soul," said John Brown, of Haddington, "hath found inexpressibly more sweetness and satisfaction in a single line of the Bible, nay in two such words as these '*thy God*' and '*my God*' than all the pleasures found in the things of the world since the creation could equal." 2. God warrants return. He will have "compassion upon thee." 3. Scripture encourages return (Isa. lv. 7.)

### SIGNS OF TRUE REPENTANCE.—Verses 8-10.

I. True Repentance is accompanied with salutary fear. "If thou shalt hearken," etc. The penitent does not trifle, but trembles at the word. He is afraid to offend. When God speaks, he listens to learn and obey.

II. True repentance leads to reformation of conduct. "Thou shalt return" (ver. 8). No murmuring, hatred, and departure from God, but right views, feelings, and relation to God. *Re-tracing* one's steps, turning again. "I will arise and go to my Father."

III. True repentance is evidenced by sincere obedience to God's will. "Turn with all thine heart and keep his commandments" v. 10). Self-will destroyed, God's authority acknowledged, and His will supreme. The *heart* rightly affected, the *life* rightly directed, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

IV. True repentance meets with divine acceptance. "The Lord thy God will make thee plenteous rejoice over thee for good" (ver. 9). Sins forgiven, deliverance from enemies, restoration to lost blessings, and divine favours enjoyed. Men unfit to be forgiven, without sorrow for sin, incapable of mercy, if insensible to wrong doing, and resolved not to amend. We are only prepared for blessings ourselves and useful to others by deep personal repentance. Paul, Luther, Bunyan instances. Then are we "plenteous, prosperous in every work of our hand."

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF DUTY SIMPLE AND EASY.—Verses 11-13.

The people are encouraged and reminded by necessary instruction placed in their reach. God had revealed His will, and made the performance of it easy. Ignorance is inexcusable, and disobedience unreasonable.

I. It is not hidden in obscurity and mystery. Heathen oracles shrouded in mystery; signs and wonders given in the grove of Dodona; the cave of Trophonius; the temple of Delphi; and the oasis of Ammon. But the commands of God are simple and duty clear. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth" (Is. xlv. 19).

II. It is accessible. "The word is very nigh unto thee" (ver. 14). 1. Not in heaven above. Shut up, beyond reach, but delivered and published in our

hearing. 2. Not *too distant* from us. "Beyond the sea"—to be fetched like heathen wisdom from far off lands. 3. It is *nigh*. In our moral constitution, the word of God and the sound of the gospel. No long course of ceremonies and round of duties to obtain peace. "Confess with the mouth and believe with thine heart."

III. It is practicable. "That thou mayest do it." The word is clear, and available to be obeyed. Its obligations are not impracticable, beyond our power to fulfil. To *know* will not avail; we must loyally *do* the command. Creeds may be orthodox and accurate; but the law and the gospel must be put into the *heart* and the life.

#### GREAT PRINCIPLES, OR LAW APPLIED BY GOSPEL.

The passage is not cited by St. Paul merely in the way of illustration, much less as accommodated to suit the purposes of the argument on hand, regardless of its significance in its own context. We have in Romans an authoritative interpretation of what the words of Moses do really and principally, if not obviously signify. The prophet spake, the apostle expounded, by one and the selfsame spirit. Those who believe this will not question its authority, and consequently not the correctness of the sense assigned by the latter to the words of the former.—*Speak. Com.*

I. God has clearly made known His will to man. "This commandment." A law of Divine authority. Not to be mutilated, adjusted and treated at pleasure. Neither self-contradictory nor impossible to understand. But essential, plain and reasonable in requirement.

II. It is therefore needless for man to search for what is made known. Such a revelation puts an end to all efforts for that which is revealed. We need not climb the sky, nor cross the sea. 1. This would imply *ignorance*, which is not excusable, for the word is nigh, spoken by human lips, and clear as day. 2. This would imply *obstinacy*. A rejection of God's revelation, as much as if Moses or Israel had tried to obtain by human wisdom what God had made known.

III. It is man's best interest to believe and obey God's will. We can never guide and justify ourselves. Christ puts an end to self righteousness and brings a righteousness through faith. 1. *This allays our anxiety*. "Say not" in doubt, perplexity and unbelief, "who shall go up," etc. Why search for a thing that is near? 2. *This satisfies our moral need*. It sufficeth intellect and heart—accords with our mental constitution and moral condition. 3. *It is the only method of salvation*. The word is required by all, within the reach of all, and must be appropriated by all. Its rejection is not due to physical or mental incapacity but to want of will, lack of faith. "Confess with thy mouth, believe in thine heart and thou shalt be saved."

IV. That man may believe and obey—the gospel brings him help. Righteousness by works precluded. Human obedience could not reach the required standard. Faith not works the method of God's righteousness. Law says *do this* and thou shalt live; gospel, "*believe* and thou shalt be saved." Paul interprets the law, as Israel, as all men will look upon it when "circumcised in heart." Christ is the only, the all-sufficient hope for the sinner. He delivers from despair and a broken law—brings peace to the heavy laden and confers that "righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe."

O how unlike the complex works of man,  
Heaven's easy, artless, unincumber'd plan!

Inscribed above the portal from afar,  
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,  
Legible only by the light they give,

Stand the soul-quick'ning words—*Believe and live!*—*Corper. Truth* 21-31.



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 11-14. *The Bible in itself.*** The text shows. 1. The closeness with which the word of God addresses the soul, and the paternal familiarity of its style: "the word is very nigh unto thee." II. That His word is to be avowedly our counsellor, "in thy mouth." III. That it is to be embraced by our affections, and dwell in them; "in thy heart." IV. That obedience to it is the necessary proof of a believing reception of it; "that thou mayest do it."—*Biblical Museum.*

**Ver. 12. *Say.*** The anxious follower after righteousness is not disappointed by an impracticable code, nor mocked by an unintelligible revelation: the word is *near him*, therefore *accessible*; *plain* and *simple*

and therefore *apprehensible*; and we may fairly add, deals with *definite historical fact*, and therefore *certain* (*Alford* on Rom. x., 6.). The law of Christ is substantially the same as that of Moses, only (1) exhibited more clearly in its spiritual nature and extensive application and (2) accompanied with the advantages of gospel grace, is practicable and easy.—(*Jamieson*).

**Ver. 14.** In the *heart* for our personal salvation in the *mouth* for God's glory and the salvation of others. In the heart and not in the mouth is cowardice; in the mouth and not in the heart is hypocrisy. The gospel *believed* is a fountain in the heart; the gospel *confessed* is the streams through the mouth.—*Robinson.*

THE ALTERNATIVE CHOICE.—*Verses 15-20.*

Moses is extremely anxious for the welfare of his people. But he cannot force them to do right. He urges, persuades, and entreats; makes a final effort to win them over. "See, I have set before thee, etc."

**I. Obedience to God's command leads to life.** "That thou mayest live" (ver. 16). Under law and gospel this is the immutable order. 1. *It pleases God the source of life.* Without Him life is a shadow, a blank. "In Him we live." 2. *It secures outward blessings to sustain life.* "Thy God shall bless thee in the land." "Godliness hath promise of the life that now is." "He is thy life, and the length of thy days" (ver. 20). 3. *It gains divine favour*, which is life, and His loving kindness, which is better than life (lives). Lives which are longest and happiest—all lives put together (Ps. lxxiii. 3).

**II. Disobedience leads to death.** "As righteousness tendeth to life," is full of real enjoyment, of infinite and eternal pleasure, "so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death" (Prov. xi. 19). 1. *Death most dreadful.* The curse of God (ver. 19). Sin, a constant warfare with God, can never succeed; hopes wither away and the curse ruins. 2. *Death most certain.* "Ye shall surely perish" (ver. 18). It cannot be avoided; is the only possible result of disobedience. As sure as the shadow follows the substance, or the avenger of blood pursued the man-layer, so sure will sinners find *evil* and *death* at last. 3. *Death of which warning has been given.* "See, behold, I have set before you" (ver. 15). Warning with deepest anxiety and most passionate appeal. No excuse, you know; you see—"Forewarned, forearmed." Flee impending evil and hide in Christ. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, etc."

**III. Hence the urgent request for right choice.** "Therefore choose life" (ver. 19). 1. *You are free* to choose. God interferes not, nor trifles with the power of free choice. We are alone before God, individually responsible, and must decide for ourselves the question on which eternal life or death depends.

2 *You are urged to choose.* Our Maker and Preserver commends his love, claims our loyalty, and commands us to choose. "Choose life." 3. There should be no delay. "This day." The appeal from supreme authority to the noblest part of our nature and for our highest interests. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

**I. Great moral truths are put before men.** "Good and evil, life and death, blessing and cursing." Not simply to decide for business and profession, but to adjust claims of heaven and earth. Grand opportunity. Lost spirits not the chance!

**II. Men's destiny will be decided according to their attitude towards these truths.** Future results follow from present action. In worldly matters fortune made or marred, positions gained or lost by earnest decision. Paley at college shakes off habitual negligence, rises at four o'clock to study and write immortal books. "I will be a hero," was the turning point in Nelson's destiny. A decided "No" to evil, a firm purpose gives strength and security (Joseph and Daniel). Eternity—life or death, heaven or hell hang on your decision.

**III. A solemn appeal is made for right decision.** Right and good are revealed, commended and offered. They cannot be ignored or destroyed. A choice *must* be made. Direction and help offered. Ponder well. Ruin inevitably follows sin and indecision. "Therefore choose life" (ver. 19).

Our doubts are traitors;  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt it. —*Shakespeare.*

#### TWO PATHWAYS OF LIFE.—*Verses 16, 17–20.*

God is the centre and sum of happiness—the author of our being, and should be the object of pursuit. Some cleave to God and others forsake him. Hence two pathways set forth.

1. *Some are forsaking God, ver. 17.* The soul made for fellowship with God, apart from Him is a world without sun. Yet what forgetfulness, departure and practical atheism in life! 1. *Through alienated affection.* "If *thine heart* turn away." We have affections as well as intellect. These influence our judgment and discernment of truth. God seeks to instruct the heart, not the head, to captivate and improve the affections. "An evil heart of unbelief" leads to apostasy from God, Heb. iii. 12.

2. *Manifest in wilful deafness.* "Thou wilt not hear." The voice loud as thunder, but the will fixed and stubborn, conscience resisted and warning refused. "They are like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ear."

3. *Indicative of weak attachment.* "Drawn away" by counter attractions. If the heart not rightly fixed, attention is misdirected, then instability, feebleness and falling away. "Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart."

4. *Resulting in degraded idolatry.* "Worship other gods and serve them."—God out of our thoughts (Rom. i. 28) and dethroned from heart and life, the creature will be set up. The conserving principle is destroyed; degradation, gross idolatry, and pollution ensue.

"God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods."

When to our own devices left, we frame  
A shameful creed of craft and cruelty.

—*London.*

**II Others are loyal in obedience to God.** "Love the Lord thy God—obey His voice—cleave to Him" (ver. 20). 1. *Love, the spring of obedience.* This its essential principle. Authority cannot kindle love, and service without love is slavery and disloyalty. 2. *Love, the rule of daily life.* "To walk in His ways." Love is the dominant power in all activity and enterprise. Obedience is not for a season, but constant and universal. "Blessed is he who doeth righteousness at all times." 3. *Love, resulting in God's favour.* "Thy God shall bless thee." Bless thee with preservation from danger; "the Lord preserveth all them that love Him"—with peace, "great peace have they which love thy law"—with perpetuation of life and attendant blessings, "bless thee in the land and prolong thy days." God's favour converts power and external possessions into blessings. Without this, fairest prospects and largest estates lose their charm—without this, no certainty of any possession and not a day's lease of life. "He is thy life and the length of thy days."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 16. His ways** 1. *The path-way.* Safe, pleasant, and attractive. 2. *How to enter it.* Love and obedience. "Love the Lord" and "keep His commandments." 3. *The benefits of walking in it.* "Live, multiply and blessed in the land." "Show me thy ways O Lord, teach me thy paths."

**Vers. 15-19. Life and death set before the young.** I. In what sense life and death may be justly set before you. 1. You are faithfully informed that the course you adopt and pursue through life will terminate at last in an immense and tremendous extreme, as distant from the opposite as life is from death. 2. The nature of the two ways is closely pointed out to you. II. The manner in which they are proposed to your choice. There are some things—1. To alarm; promote self-jealousy and fear; the intrinsic depravity of your hearts; the fact that so much evil appears under semblance of good; prejudiced views of real religion. 2. To encourage: you never can be at a loss in deciding what is best. 3. To direct and admonish: beware of early levity, of bad habits, of ensnaring connections, of trifling with religion. III. Some considerations to enforce the importance of your choice. (1.) Privileges from earliest days. (2.) Special personal considerations. (3.) Influence of posterity.—*Bib. Museum.*

**Ver. 19. Two witnesses.** Heaven and earth. Moved, "called to record

in solemn manner." *cf.* 4, 26; 31, 28. 1. Because they indicate the presence of God. Heaven the throne and earth the footstool of God. 2. Because they help remembrance of events. Localities identified by the mind, spectators of scenes testify to the faithfulness of God and the sin of man. 3. Because influenced by the conduct of man. In his creation and fall they have felt the results and long for his redemption (Rom. viii. 19-23). *Choose life.* Divine advice. 1. The problems of life too difficult for us to solve. 2. God offers to be our guide; gives help and direction. 3. It is our duty to obey. When He speaks we should listen, obey and reverence His word. 4. It is madness to reject divine instruction, "Ye shall surely perish."

**Ver. 20. Three steps.** Love—obey—cleave, "Without close attachment and perseverance, temporary love, however sincere and fervent, temporary obedience, however disinterested, energetic and pure, while it lasts, will be ultimately ineffectual. He alone who endures to the end shall be saved."—*A. Clarke.* Cleave. Notice. 1. God the object of life. 2. The strength of attachment. 3. The constancy of pursuit. "My soul followeth hard after (cleaveth unto) Thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 8).

Grace leads the right way; if you choose the wrong, Take it and perish, but restrain your tongue; Charge not, with light sufficient and left free, Your wilful suicide on God's decree.

—Couper.  
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## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAP. XXX.

**Ver. 2. Return.** When wrong has been done among men, the only way to obtain again the favour of those who have been injured, is by repentance. No man who has done evil in any way can be restored to forfeited favour, but by just this process of repentance—by a process involving all the elements of shame, grief, remorse, reformation, confession that are demanded in religion.—*Barnes.*

**Ver. 11. Not hidden.** "We ought not to attempt to draw down, or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to Divine truth.—*Bacon.*

**Ver. 14. Do it.** "Sir," said the Duke of Wellington to an officer of engineers, who urged the impossibility of executing the directions he had received, "I did not ask your opinion, I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed." Such should be the obedience of every follower of Jesus, the words which he has spoken are our law, not our judgment or

fancies. Even if death were in the way it is—

Not ours to reason why—  
Ours, but to dare and die.

and, at our master's bidding, advance through flood or flame.—*Spurgeon.*

**Vers. 15–19. This day.** It is recorded of Archius, a Grecian magistrate, that a conspiracy was formed against his life. A friend, who knew the plot, despatched a courier with the intelligence, who, on being admitted to the presence of the magistrate, delivered to him a packet with this message, "My Lord, the person who writes you this letter conjures you to read it immediately—it contains serious matters." Archius, who was then at a feast, replied, smiling, "Serious affairs to-morrow," put the packet aside and continued the revel. On that night the plot was executed, the magistrate slain, and Archius, on the morrow, when he intended to read the letter, a mutilated corpse, leaving to the world a fearful example of the effects of procrastination.—*J. A. James.*

## CHAPTER XXXI.

**CRITICAL REMARKS.**—Moses had finished the interpretation and enforcement of the law. But his work is not quite accomplished, he therefore makes final arrangements.

**1-6. Encouragement to Israel.** Went *Heb.* continued to speak and prepare himself. His age not likely to render him a sufficient guide in future, though his natural force was unabated (*cf.* xxxiv. 7.) God also had intimated his approaching death and forbidden him to go over Jordan (*Num.* xx. 24). But God will go with them and Joshua will lead them, Hence "Be strong, he will not fail thee." (*cf.* Josh. i. 5, *Heb.* xiii. 5.)

**7-8. Joshua becomes leader.** Encouraged in the same words as the people. In the sight of all that his authority might not be questioned. Fear not. Many dangers and great reasons for fear—looking only to themselves.

**9-13. Moses commits the Law to Levites.** To be read at the end of seven years—the year of release (*ver.* 15). 1. Taber (*Lev.* xxiii. 24). Appear (*ver.* 11; *cf.* xvi. 16; *Neh.* viii. 12 *sq.*) Read, *Josh.* viii. 34; 2 *Kings* xxiii. Law—not the whole Pentateuch, but summaries.

**14-18. Moses informed of his Death.** Called with Joshua into the tabernacle (*v.* 15) he would sleep (lie down) with his fathers, but the nation would apostatise go a whoring. (*cf.* *Ex.* xxxiv. 15; *Judg.* ii. 17.) Break the covenant and God in anger would hide his face and suffer them to fall into deep troubles.

**19-23. Moses commanded to write a song as "a witness for God against them." Waxen fat** (*cf.* xxxii. 15; *Neh.* ix. 23; *Hos.* xiii. 6. Forgotten (*ver.* 21). "Being in verse it would be more easily learned and kept in memory. The use of songs for such didactic purposes not unknown to legislators of antiquity, and was familiar to theologians of later times of Social History (*Ecc.* vi. 8 and *Col.* iii. 16)"—*Speak. Com.*

24-27. The song finished and put into the ark of covenant. The book commenced before Ex. xvii. 14, gradually increased and now *finished*, i.e., in full, wholly complete. In the side. (ver. 26) for greater security and reverence. Only tables of stone in the ark (1 Kings viii. 9). Ver. 27. Words by which Moses handed the book to the priests.

28-30. Rehearsal to assembled elders. Gather civil authorities of the congregation specially to hear the ode. Know partly for past experience and partly for gift of prophecy. He pronounced the words audibly to the representative and they to the people of the song following.

### A FAREWELL ADDRESS.—Verses 1-6.

Moses had spent 40 years in Pharaoh's court, 40 years in Midian, and 40 as leader of Israel. He is about to leave his people, but gives specific instructions and makes certain arrangements, from which learn—

I. God's workmen are often taken away in the midst of usefulness. The work of Moses not finished but he had intimation of death. 1. *Through old age*. "I am an hundred and twenty, &c." Old comparatively for "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Age brings infirmities, and incapacitates for work. "It is the worst time we can choose to mend either our lives or our fortunes," says one. Not the time to begin the service of God, who deserves our energy from our youth, cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35 : Ecc. xii. 1-7. 2. *Through special Providence*. Sometimes punishment for sin. Moses and Aaron forbidden to enter Canaan, Num. xx. 12. David could not build the temple. Or accidents and sudden death cut off men when prominent, in the prime of life and the splendour of fame, and likely to be useful. Men who leave a blank not easily filled up, a heavy loss to the Christian Church and the world. Let each fulfil the end of life and be able to say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

II. God's work is carried on by successors. Moses dies, and Joshua succeeds. "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work," says Wesley. 1. *Successors divinely called*. Joshua specially chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. God's servants not self-called, nor put into office by friendship and worldly favour. "There is nothing in which a king would be more absolute than in the choice of his ministers. And shall we dare to contest and take away this right from the King of Kings?" *Quesnel*. 2. *Successors specially qualified*. Joshua specially gifted and trained by service. More than natural endowment required. "None but he who made the world can make a minister of the gospel," said Newton. None selected for important work enters it at his own charge. God equips and helps.

III. God gives encouragement to those who carry on his work. Fellow workers may fall, but God compensates for loss. 1. *By his presence*, "He will go over before thee," ver. 3. If under the inspiration of Alexander, Cæsar, and other great leaders, soldiers have performed exploits, what can we not do with God present! Failure impossible with him! 2. *By his promise*. Presence animates, but accompanied with promise often makes soldiers irresistible. God's promises may be trusted, God's bonds given and sealed with his own hand. "He will not fail thee, &c." 3. *By his help*. Promise must issue in performance. God is strength for burdens and a shield for battles. His grace makes the heart stout and the arm strong. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

### A GLORIOUS PAST.—Verse 4.

1. *A godly people will always have a glorious past*. Israel's past, England's past. A Christian man looks back upon a wonderful past-enlightenment, for-

givenness and adoption, great peace, great joy, and great hope. Nothing little in redemption. God's gifts like himself. "Great and marvellous are thy works." 11. *This glorious past should not be forgotten.* The great things of God should be remembered, considered, and prompt to obedience. They are helpful for the present, pledges of God's faithfulness and power and types of future mercies. "The Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you," ver 5.

### LIFE'S CONFLICTS.—Verses 3-6.

Israel about to engage in arduous warfare. God would help them, therefore they must not be discouraged. **I. Life a warfare.** *A soldier's* life hardness endured, 2 Tim. ii. 3. Discomforts in camp, field duties, tedious marches, great and numerous foes to overcome (Sihon and Og), territories to gain, and a purpose to be accomplished.

**II. We are not sufficient in ourselves for this warfare.** In us no good thing. Our sufficiency for everything from God. 1. *We are weak.* Need strength and defence. Divine grace alone makes the heart stout and the arm strong. "We have no might against this company." 2. *We are timid.* "Fear not," "Cowardice hath made us by-words to our enemies" (*Shaks.*), and a disgrace to our captain. Swedenborg says, "Charles II. did not know what that was which others called fear." Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage." 3. *We are afraid.* Danger frightens, enemies overawe, and we forebode evil. We fight with shadows and waste our strength. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, &c," Deu. vii. 18.

**III. In God we may have confidence to help.** "The Lord thy God, he doth go with thee." Not much behind, nor too far before, with thee, to guide, Prov. xx. 24; xvi. 9; provide, Heb. xiii. 5; and help, Jos. i. 5. Confidence; 1. *In the word of God.* The promise counteracts tendency to doubt and faint, fitted to produce and support assurance. 2. *In the faithfulness of God.* He never modifies, retracts, nor forgets his word. He wills and intends to fulfil it. Nothing can make him recede from his merciful purpose, nor cause him to repent or violate his pledge. "The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." 3. *In the presence of God.* "He will go over before thee," ver 3. God with Moses, God with Joshua, God with every good man—with thee. Grand words to begin an undertaking and conquest, to encourage in life's dangers and toils! "Understand, therefore, this day that the Lord thy God is he who goeth over before thee, &c.," Deu. ix. 3. 4. *In the strength of God.* He increases our might, makes us more than ourselves, more than a match for any foe. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life," Jos. i. 5. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought, Is. xli. 13.

### THE CHOSEN LEADER.—Verses 7, 8.

In the choice of Joshua, Moses displays his greatness and intense anxiety for his people. No excessive grief, nor unavailing remorse. He appoints a successor not out of his own family or from his own choice, but according to God's will (*cf.* Num. xxvii. 15).



**I. A leader specially qualified for the work.** Joshua was honoured and qualified in an eminent degree. 1. *Trained under Moses.* He was the minister, the servant of Moses (Jos. i. 1). With him on the Mount (Ex. xxiv. 13), and a companion in the camp. 2. *Qualified by God.* Filled with the spirit of wisdom, courage, and the fear of God (Deut. xxxiv. 9). As leader under a theocracy he was to act as the minister of God, wait for instructions from God, and shepherd or lead the people as the flock of God (Num. xxvii. 17).

**II. A leader publicly chosen.** "In the sight of all Israel" designated to office. By a solemn rite set apart (Num. xxvii. 18). 1. *To indicate the solemnity of the charge.* 2. *To set forth its responsibility.* 3. *To identify himself with the people.* 4. *To gain the sympathy of the people.* "Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it" (Deut. i. 38).

**III. A leader specially encouraged.** Though courageous and resolute he required help. The work was new, long, and arduous. He felt inferior to Moses, and knew the perverseness of the people. 1. *Divinely guided.* Jehovah would go before him. What help and inspiration in this thought. "There is no inspiration so great as to feel the influence of a spirit greater and nobler than our own. When we listen to his voice, when we are ready to do his will, our whole nature is liberated and exalted, and out of this the greatest and noblest work comes" (*Dr. Allon*). 2. *Divinely assisted.* "He will not fail thee." Joshua not faint-hearted, but humble; hence cheered, often encouraged to "be strong." If God be with us, what account those against us! Who can defeat Divine wisdom or overcome Omnipotence! In God's work God's servants never alone, never forsaken. Joshua took the reins of government and led the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. Brave in counsel and brave in war, he trusted in God and accomplished his charge. Be you courageous, hold the divine commands sacred and in spite of opposition yield full and hearty obedience. This is true wisdom and gains true success. "Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (do wisely)" (Jos. i. 8).

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears,  
Where duty bids he confidently steers,  
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,  
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 2. Thou shalt not go over.**

1. Best men not infallible, may sin.
2. Consequences of one sin most serious.
3. God impartial and just in punishing sin.

never shall the covenant of his faithfulness fail."

**Vers. 3-6. I. A disheartened people.** Great leader lost. Great work to be done. Our work to dethrone enemies, enter lands, establish and maintain the worship of God and the Kingdom of Christ. "The children of Judah could not drive them out." **II. A sufficient God.** "With thee" in presence; "before thee" in providence; abiding in strength "not fail thee."—"The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but

**Vers. 6-8. Antidote to fear.** "Fear not." I. He is *able* to help thee: He will not fail thee, in adversity or prosperity—will guard thee against the immediate dangers of the one, and the seductive influences of the other. II. He is *willing* to help thee: not able merely, but willing alone. III. He has *promised* to help thee: and his promises are always sure. Learn (1) Rely on God's power; (2) Trust in his promises (*Biblical Museum*).—*God's Providence the ground of contentment* (cf. Heb. xiii. 5). "He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." **1.**

*Then cherish no distressing care*—"one hair white or black"—"cast your care upon him." 2. *Then cease to devise your own plans.* We scheme for our children and our business, tempt providence and take destiny into our own hands. God's will supreme. "Commit thy way to him, &c." 3. *Then exercise implicit faith in God*; (1) whose *promise* is sure; (2) whose *power* is omnipotent; (3) whose *providence* is universal. *Be strong.* "The Septuagint in this and the following verse have *play the man, and be strong.* From this St. Paul seems to have borrowed his ideas (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) Stand firm in the faith;

play the man, act like heroes; be vigorous."—*A. Clarke.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Appointment of Joshua to succeed Moses.* Consider: 1. The concern of Moses for the people committed to him. In this he acted as—1. as a true patriot; 2. a faithful minister. II. The gracious provision which God made for them: 1. He selected a suitable person for the office; 2. He prescribed the mode of his ordination to it. (Num. xxvii. 15-17; 3. He promised him all needful assistance in it. Learn (1) the blessedness of the Christian Church; (2) the duty of advancing in every possible way its best interest.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

### THE INHERITED VOLUME.—Verses 9, 13, 19, 22, 24-26.

Moses now commits the law which he had written into the hands of the priests and elders, the religious and secular rulers of the congregation, to be read and preserved for future generations.

**I. The Law to be written.** "Moses wrote this law." This a natural and safe method of transmission. More secure, complete, and diffusive than oral tradition. In this method titles and estates are handed down, arts and sciences propagated. This law has to rank in the literature of Israel as a story-book for children and a statute book for all. Hence written and carefully preserved in the archives of the nation. "Write in a book."

**II. The Law to be read.** Strict are regulations on this point. 1. *Read at festivals.* Four instances given (Jos. viii. 30; 2 Chron. xvii. 7; xxxiv. 30; Neh. viii. 7). *a.* "In the year of release" (ver. 10). When servants were discharged, debtors acquitted, and all had leisure to read. Spare time and special occasions should be devoted to Bible reading. *b.* "In the feast of tabernacles." Most appropriate season, as revealing the source and purifying the nature of their joy—connecting the design of the law with the spirit of the festival. 2. *Read in public assemblies.* "In the place" of assembly (ver. 11). Bible reading important part of religious worship—needful for instruction, reverence and edification—a privilege to meet in God's house to expound the law and review His mercies. 3. *Read to all classes.* Old and young, and strangers within the gates (ver. 12). All classes interested—home-born and aliens, bond and free, must be taught the word of God. There is no hesitation, no fear of giving the law to the common people. It is their right and privilege that they may hear, love, and obey God.

**III. The law to be preserved** (vers. 24-26). What was written, was needful to preserve for that and future nations. A second copy of the law was deposited in the ark for greater reverence and security. 1. *Preserved as a rule of life.* "That they may hear, learn, and obey" (ver. 12). Men apt to forget what God requires. Philosophy and reason do not supply a standard of duty. In the Bible, and the Bible alone, have we a guide sufficient and unsurpassed—a book to make us wise unto salvation. 2. *Preserved as a witness against disobedience.* Memory may fail and teachers die; but the law abides firm and

faithful in its testimony. Solemn to have God's law and neglect it—to turn the blessing into a curse and the best of books into a witness against us. Every sermon we hear, every chapter we read, will help or finally condemn. "Take heed how ye hear."

### THE BIBLE IN NATIONAL HISTORY.

**I. As the Basis of its Religion.** Natural religion is founded on reason or the light of philosophy. Systems of belief are often refined speculations of mind, conflicting, uncertain, and insufficient. *Revealed* religion is spiritual, vital, and safe. The Bible alone reveals God and moral duty, explains religious worship, and offers moral renovation. It is the foundation of faith and practice, and hope for the present and future life.

**II. As the Friend of its Education.** The Bible proves the necessity and the value of education. It fosters and promotes intelligence among the masses, helps to rear noble institutions, to enlighten and refine society. It has given the world new ideas and impulses not found in the province of letters. Superb themes for poetry, painting, and fine arts, and thus the highest enjoyment and most exalted thoughts have been furnished by the Bible.

**III. As the Source of its Progress.** In the Bible are strong innate principles to civilize and elevate. Where these principles are practised we find refinement, free institutions, and the blessings of liberty. Morals are purified, commercial enterprise encouraged, cruelties and war abolished. How much is England indebted to the Bible? What is the condition of countries where the Bible is fettered, exiled or unknown? It is source of progress in learning, legislation, and religion. It is not dead or effete yet. Its mission is great and sublime. It is emphatically the Book for the people, the Book for the nation, and the Book for the age.

This lamp from off the everlasting throne,  
Mercy took down, and in the night of time  
Stood casting on the dark her gracious bow,  
And evermore beseeching men, with tears,  
And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.—*Pollok, Bk. 1*

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 7-13. Methods of propagating Scripture.** By writing or printing, by public reading or expounding. Let us be thankful for a complete and printed Bible. The heritage of the past and the trust of the present. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God."

*The Bible and the children.* Revealing God to children, prescribing duties to children, fostering the spirit to perform these duties, and ensuring the happiness of children. The Bible an entrancing book to children, in its spirit, examples, and lessons. *The Bible in the family.* The Bible should be read in the family. When read

rightly it promotes domestic comfort, cleanliness, industrious and provident habits; it purifies the affections and fills the dwelling with joy in poverty and depression of trade.—("The Cotter's Saturday night.")—"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

**Vers. 10-12.** Directions here given for public reading of the law. 1. To be read at "the feast of tabernacles," the greatest of all their festivals, when harvest and vintage being completed, they had most leisure to attend to it. This feast was celebrated in "the year of release," the most proper time



that could be chosen for reading the law; for then the people were freed from debts, troubles, and cares of a worldly nature, and at liberty to attend to it, without distraction. 2. The law was to be read by Joshua, chief governor, and by others who had the charge of instructing the people. Thus Joshua himself read to the congregation Jos. viii. 34, 35; Josiah and Ezra, 2 Chr. xxxiv. 30; Neh. viii. 2. But Jehoshaphat employed priests and Levites (2 Chr. xvii. 9). This public reading was in part the duty of the king, the Jews say, who began it, and that afterwards it was taken up by the priests. 3. The law was to be read in the hearing of all Israel (ver. 11). (1) Pious Jews who had copies doubtless read in their own houses. (2) Some portion was read in the synagogue every Sabbath day (Acts xv. 21). (3) In Jehoshaphat's time it was read by his command in the different cities of Judah, and the people were in-

structed out of it by the priests and Levites, but (4) at every year of release the law was read, not only publicly to all the people, but throughout, and read from an original copy, which served as a standard by which all other copies were tried. 4. The whole congregation must assemble to hear the law. Hence learn (1) that when our debts are remitted and we are brought into the liberty of God's children we shall then delight to hear and obey our delivering Lord in every call of duty. (2) The word of God being our only rule, should be read and known of all; how cruel the attempt, and how contrary to the Divine will, to keep it locked up from the people in an unknown tongue, and to establish ignorance by law! (3) Nothing should engage us more solicitously than the early instruction of our children in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures, which alone can make them wise unto salvation.—*J. Wilson.*

#### A SOLEMN MEETING.—*Verses 14-16, 23.*

Moses commanded to present himself with Joshua in the tabernacle, the circumstances in which they met, and the charge they received, made the meeting memorable and solemn.

I. The persons who met, made the meeting solemn. Not the congregation, but the leaders. Numbers interest, excite and create enthusiasm. When few meet together in private prayer or Sunday class, the occasion is often solemn. Prayers more ardent and appeals more effectual. God meets with two or three.

II. The place in which they met made the meeting solemn. The tabernacle, the special dwelling of Jehovah, filled with his glory, the cloud outside and inside. The utmost done to invest the place with peculiar sanctity. Repeatedly is the injunction given: "Ye shall reverence my sanctuary." In our sinful and weak condition we need manifestations to excite awe, and glory tempered with clouds to encourage access.

III. The purpose for which they met made the meeting solemn. 1. Moses to receive intimation of his death. "Thou shalt die." Solemn message! but no grief nor murmuring. His chief concern for a successor (Num. xxvii. 16). He was not unprepared, but resigned, ready and responded to the call. Could we face a sentence like this? Our death will be a personal approach to God. "Set thine house in order." 2. Joshua to be inaugurated to office. Publicly designated before. But a higher sanction required to encourage the leader himself, and beget the respect and obedience of a fickle and perverse people. We should ever listen to the voice of God and feel that his equipment is needful for every enterprize. 3. Both to hear of future apostacy, Moses would grieve and intercede; Joshua would be aware of danger and strive to avert it.

Sad predictions, casting shadows of fear in the hour of death and upon the entrance of office. But whatever brings us near to God, and prepares for the events of life or death is profitable.

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical love,  
And coming events cast their shadows before.

—T. Campbell.

### THE DARK PROSPECT—Verses 16–21.

What human insight could pronounce such a future, especially when the moral condition of the people and present signs seemed to contradict it. What human legislator would give laws and predict that his subjects would break them! What a proof is this of the divine origin of this sacred book!

**I. The chosen people turning into apostates.** Disowning their relation "to go a whoring after other Gods." 1. *Unfaithful in special trust* (ver. 20). Received the land, yet neglected to drive out its people, the least unfaithfulness may bring a curse, as the weakest footstep or the slightest breath may cause an avalanche to entomb a village. 2. *Ungrateful for innumerable favours* (ver. 20). Fed upon the gifts and forgot the giver. Indulged in sensual enjoyments, abused prosperity, "according to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 6)." 3. *Rebellious against divine laus*. "Break my covenant." Forgetful of dependence, proud of their position, they were a law unto themselves. Having thrown off allegiance to God, "they turn unto other gods."

**II. Divine Goodness turned into Divine Wrath.** "Then my anger shall be kindled against them," ver. 17. God's relations to us and dealings with us, according to our conduct. 1. *Anger most severe*. "Many evils and troubles shall befall them." 2. *Anger most destructive*. "They shall be devoured." Fearful aspect of God. "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." 3. *Anger in recompense to sin*. "Are not these evils because God is not among us," ver. 17. Sin ever brings its own retribution, and presumptuous sins defy God's authority. He justly casts off those who rebel against him, withdraws protection and prosperity, and leaves them to suffer the consequences of their own sins. "I will punish them (visit upon) for their ways, and reward (return to) them their doings, Hos., iv. 7.

**III. Special Checks failing in desired results.** Ver. 21. The example and influence of Moses, the anointing and authority of Joshua, the declaration of law, and the presence of death itself, were expedients to prevent evil. Restraints are needful for the individual and the nations. But when men's hearts are "fully set in them to do evil," neither affliction, the checks of conscience, nor the restraints of providence will hinder. "A stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their hearts aright," ever wavered in allegiance, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God," Ps. lxxviii. 8.

**IV. Severe punishment without remedy.** Indications of God's displeasure were many, but the greatest punishment was the "hiding of his face from them on that day." In the darkest day, in the greatest trouble we may rejoice in the light of his countenance. But if God hide his face from us, and forsake us, prayer avails not, our sun is turned into darkness and life into mourning. 1. *Enquiry can find no escape*, ver. 17. Are these evils not the result of God's withdrawal? Let us consult and try to discover escape. Intense anxiety and earnest search in vain. "Thou shalt not escape out of his hand." 2. *Future prospect affords no escape*, ver. 18. Future condition would be worse than the present; sin and servitude, judgment and deliverance marked

their history, but changed not their disposition, Judg. ii. 19. God was provoked; his anger was kindled. "They were devoured (consumed with affliction) and troubles befell (found) them because forsaken of God, ver. 17. Such is the dark prospect of the sinner. God warns and urges escape. "Stand in awe and sin not."

"Take heed, for God holds vengeance in His hand  
To hurl upon their heads that break his law."—*Shakespeare*

### A SONG FOR THE PEOPLE—Verses 19-26.

Laws, history and proverbs often put into verse. The valour and praises of famous men often sung at feasts. National songs are retained in the memories and stir the deepest feelings of a people. This song of Moses (ch. 2), composed by divine inspiration, to be learnt by Israel and taught their children in every age. Poetry and prose, the energy of heart and tones of voice should be consecrated to God. "Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," etc.

I. The song in its form. "Write this song." This the best method for preserving and transmitting divine revelations to mankind, more natural, secure, complete and diffusive than oral testimony.

II. The song in its design. 1. *To reverse God's mercy* (ver. 20). In making the covenant bestowing the land, and giving prosperity. It commemorates God's sovereign mercy and rich provision for his people. "Put it in their mouths" that it may stir their hearts. "Sing unto the Lord." 2. *To justify God's proceeding*. "That this song may be a witness for me." In forewarning of danger, checking tendencies to fall into it, and persuading to love and obedience. The word tells truth, points out duty, and will witness for God in apostacy and punishment. 3. *To humble the people*. The song reminded of dependence, "was well suited to inspire the popular mind with a sense of God's favour to their nation." A nation sinful, rebellious and unworthy. If it did not prevent apostacy it would lead to penitence and humility. "It shall not be forgotten."

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 16. *Thou shalt sleep* (may lie down). Old Testament conception of death. 1. Life a period of work. 2. Death a rest, a lying down. 3. But there will be a rising up, an awakening from this sleep (*cf.* Ps. lxxvi. 6; Dan. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 13; 2 Peter iii. 4). 4. This resurrection a gathering to good men. Death not dominion for ever, cuts not off from Holy patriarchs and companions—"Thou shalt be gathered unto thy people" (Num. xxvii. 13).

Ver. 19. *A witness for me*. 1. Of his kindness in giving them so many blessings. 2. Of His patience in bearing so long with them. 3. Of His

clemency in giving them such fair and plain warnings, and, 4. Of His justice in punishing such an unthankful, perverse and incorrigible people.—*J. Wilson*.

Ver. 20. Notice—1. Selfish indulgence. 2. Sinful pride. 3. Abominable idolatry associated with—(a) debasing service; (b) Open rebellion; (c) Divine provocation—sins most unnatural, most dangerous. "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods. When I fed them to the full they committed adultery." (Jer. v. 7)



THE FAITHFUL AMANUENSIS.—*Verses 11, 24–26, 30.*

**I. The work in which he was engaged.** “Write ye this.” Ancient kings copied the law. Monks in the Scriptorium, careful and devout, exact and conscientious, have preserved learning and handed down Manuscripts. Let us be thankful for the alphabet, printing, and the arts of civilization!

**II. The method in which he prosecuted the work.** 1. *Patient in spirit.* Slow process, not like printing, to write. 2. *Preserving in effort.* “Until they were finished” (ver. 24).—*Ven. Bede.* 3. *Mindful of the end in view.* Under solemn sense of responsibility for correctness, knowing the future consequences, yet he completes and preserves the work. 4. He recites what he writes, vocalises the word, “speaks in their ears” (ver. 28), to help the memory and impress the heart. “The manner of reading among the Orientals is not less peculiar than the style of their writing. Generally speaking, the people seem not to understand a book till they have made it vocal. They usually go on reading aloud, with a kind of singing voice, moving their heads and bodies in time, and making a monotonous cadence at regular intervals; thus giving emphasis, although not such as would please an English ear” (*cf.* Acts viii. 27–40).

THE SOLEMN WARNING AGAINST FUTURE IDOLATRY.—*Verses 27–30.*

Israel is again admonished of duty, solemnly forewarned of sad consequences of defection and to this very day this song is strong proof to Jew and Gentile that Moses spoke by inspiration of God.

**I. Divine Foresight of Israel's Sins.** “I know that after my death, &c.” (verse 29). Israel would decline from God, corrupt themselves, provoke God's anger and bring fearful calamities upon themselves. God knows all future events. Nothing surprises him or happens unknown. Eternity is unveiled before him and nothing is concealed from him. “Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising and understandest my thought afar off.”

**II. Solemn Warning of certain results of Israel's Sins.** Self degradation, divine provocation and a series of calamities enough to cause bitter reflection! All this warning in love, to deter from sin. Threatenings should alarm, rouse to repentance and return to God. When evil is foreseen we should hide ourselves (Prov. xxii. 3). Disciples fled from impending evil (Matt. x. 23). Paul hid himself from threatened destruction (Acts xvii. 4; xxiii. 17). “Noah moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.”

**III. Solemn Warnings disregarded and threatened results experienced** The testimony of song, the death of Moses, and the checks of providence did not prevent from sin. The presence of good men may restrain, but not eradicate evil. The expedients of God may fail. The very sins at which men are astonished may be committed, and they may rush madly on to sufferings. “Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing.” No force without, not even the *divine* law—as law merely—commanding and punishing can conquer the will. God alone by his spirit and grace can renew and control. “Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.”

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 21.** God's intimate knowledge of future evil. 1. *In its root.* Their imagination. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (Heb. whole

imagination, the purposes and desires) only evil continually (every day)” Gen. vi. 5. 2. *In its fruits.* Troubles which befall them. “As a man that

knows what roots he hath in his garden, though not a flower appears, yet can say when the spring comes, this and this will come up because he knows the garden and knows what roots are there : so the Lord knows our thoughts afar off, because he knows the principles that are within, and knows what they will do when occasion serves ; he is privy to that root that beareth gall and wormwood " (cf. xxix. 18).—*Trapp*.

Vers. 21, 27, 29. God's service.

1. Relaxed in practice. 2. Perverted in simplicity. 3. Secularised in spiri-

tualty, and 4. Debased in dignity. Sad sight ! Offensive to God ! Imagination, thought, and purpose, corrupt, evil and only evil. The root of violence and oppression, wantonness and luxury (Jas. i. 15 ; Mt. xv. 19.) " I know thy rebellion " verse 27. Not an unconcerned spectator, but as one injured and affronted, as a tender father sees the folly and stubbornness of a disobedient child who *displeases* and *grieves* him.

He that shuts love out, in turn shall  
Be shut out from love, and on her threshold  
lie  
Howling in outer darkness.—*Tennyson*.

# ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 2. *Old*. Life is the ordinance of God. Nothing more shows Divine Sovereignty than the time and place of our birth, the duration of our life and the circumstances of our death.—*G. S. Bowes*.

Vers. 3-6. *Work*. Whatever be the meanness of a man's occupation, he may discharge and prosecute it on principles common to him with Michael or Gabriel, of any of the highest spirits of heaven.—(*Binney*.) *Courage*. Ver. 6. Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm ? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer ? That kind of man never fails.—(*John Hunter*.)

Vers. 7, 8. *Joshua chosen*.

God sends his teachers with every age,  
To every clime and every race of man,  
With revelations fitted to their growth  
And shape of mind.—(*Lowell*).

Vers. 9-13. *Delivered*. Tradition is the treasure of religious thought, amassed by ages upon the platform of positive revelation.—*Vinet*.

The Protestant bible lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten—like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is a part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness ; . . . the memory of the dead passes into it. The potent

traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him for ever out of his English bible.—*Newman*.

Vers. 14, 15. Accidents occur nowhere so little as in the lives of men who have determined the history and progress of man. *Moses*, the man of God, was a man made of God for men.—*Fairbairn*.

Call *Joshua*.  
The old order changeth, yielding place to  
new ;  
And God fulfils himself in many ways.  
—*Tennyson*.

Vers. 16-18, 20, 21, 27, 29. *It shall come to pass*.

Time, as he courses onwards, still unrolls  
The volume of concealment. In the future, ,  
As in the optician's glassy cylinder,  
The undistinguishable blots and colours  
Of the dim past collect and shape themselves,  
Upstarting in their own completed image  
To scare or to reward.—*S. T. Coleridge*.

Vers. 24-26. *End of writing*.

Do not for one repulse forego the purpose  
That you resolved to effect.—*Shakespeare*.

Vers. 19-30. *Song*. " Give me the making of the nation's ballads," said Lord Chatham, " and I care not who makes the laws."

# CHAPTER XXXII.

The song composed by Moses and recited to the people as a witness against them. "It embraces the whole future history of Israel, and bears all the marks of prophetic testimony in the perfectly ideal picture which it draws on the one hand, or the benefits and blessings conferred by the Lord upon His people; on the other hand of the ingratitude with which Israel repaid God for them all" (*cf. Delitz*). The poem divided into six parts.

1-3. Introductory, importance of doctrine delivered. Heaven and earth invoked not as matter of rhetoric, not to witness for God as *cf. iv. 26; xxx. 19; xxxi. 28*, but indicative of the whole universe, which would be affected and sanctified by the righteousness of God manifest in heaven and earth. Doctrine. Let my doctrine, a prayer. Rain with soft penetrating influence (*Is. lv. 10-11*). Greatness equivalent to glory in *Ps. xxix. 1; xvi. 7, 8*.

4-6. The righteousness of God placed in contrast with the corruption, perversity and folly of Israel. Rock—first time God so called in scripture and used six times in this song. A name often found in phrases (for *Heb. Tsur*) like "strength" (*Ps. lxxiii. 26; cxli. 1*), or "Mighty One" (*Is. xxx. 29*). Perfect blameless, without fault. On contrary Israel acted corruptly (*ver. 5*). They have. The verb is singular. Render. "It (*i.e.* "the perverse and crooked generation," understood from the context) hath corrupted itself before Him" (*cf. Is. i. 4*); they are not his children, but their blemish," *i.e.*, the generation of evil doers cannot be styled God's children, but rather the shame and disgrace of God's children" (*Speak. Com.*) Crooked (*cf. Mt. xvii. 7; Luke ix. 41*.) Foolish (*ver. 6; cf. 4, 6; Ps. xc. 12*). Bought, acquired thee for His own. Made a nation.

7-14. Innumerable benefits conferred. Blessings given from the very first days of old (*ver. 7*). Divided (*ver. 8*) by His providence. Set bounds, reserved for His people a fit inheritance "according to the number," proportionate to the wants of the population. Portion (*ver. 9*), lot or piece of land; here a figure applied to the nation (*cf. Ex. xv. 16; xix. 5*). (*Ver. 10-14*) Helpless and hopeless condition of Israel, and love and care which God displayed. Waste, *lit.*, in the land of the desert and the waste ("formless waste" as *Gen. i. 2*) howling wilderness, amid ferocious beasts. Apple guarded as the tenderest part (*cf. Ps. xvii. 8; Prov. vii. 2*). Eagle noted for its care and affection (*Ex. xix. 4; Is. lxiii. 9*). 12. So the Lord alone delivered Israel and trained them. 13. Ride high positions in which they gained dominion (*cf. xxxiii. 29*). Honey, richest provisions from fruitful fields and unlikely places.

15-18. Base ingratitude for benefits. Jeshurun only found here and in *xxxiii. 5*, and *Is. xlv. 2*. A description of a nation right and just, "not the character which belonged to Israel in fact, but that to which Israel was called." An epithet intended to convey keen reproof. Fat. The figure of an ox, fat and intractable in consequence (*Is. x. 27; Hos. iv. 16*). Forsook, rejected. Esteemed, *lit.* to treat as a fool, to despise (*Mic. vii. 6*). Rock in Palestine, a refuge from enemies. Jealousy (*ver. 16*), language from matrimonial relationship (*Ex. xxxiv. 14; Is. liv. 5; Jer. ii. 25*). Devils (*ver. 17*), false gods, malignant and destructive (*Lev. xvii. 7*). Not to God, *Marg.* Not God, *i.e.*, which were not God. Gods who had not benefited them. Newly up, from near, from Moab, Amon and Canaan in a local sense; or in contrast to Jehovah, who had manifested Himself of old (*ver. 7*).

19-22. God's rejection of Israel. Abhorred, despised, cast them off. Provoked by sins. Daughters, women had full share (*Is. iii. 16; Jer. vii. 18*). See, I will show what their end will be at last.—(*Ainsworth*). No faith, no dependence upon them. *Ver. 21*, The terms, "not God" and "vanities" (nothings) were preferred, and God moved to anger. God would therefore excite them to jealousy, and ill-will by a "no-people" and "foolish nation," *i.e.*, transfer blessings upon them instead of Israel. (*Ver. 22*) When kindled divine anger would burn to lowest hell, the deepest destruction of *sheol*, the lower world, consume earth's produce and set on fire foundations of mountains.

23-28. Evils threatened many and severe, like arrows which warriors shoot at foes (*Ps. xxxviii. 3; xci. 5; Job vi. 4*). Burning heat, *i.e.*, fever of pestilence, famine, plague, wild beasts, poisonous serpents and war, would bring them to verge of destruction. (*Ver. 26*) Scatter them away and blot out their remembrance. (*Ver. 27*) Were it not that I feared, *i.e.*, that I should be provoked to wrath when the enemy ascribed the overthrow of Israel to his own prowess and not to my judgments.—(*Speak. Com.*) Hand over hand was high, *i.e.*, lifted up, shown itself mighty. For the reason they deserved not to be spared.

29-33. The reasons which lead to severity. They were foolish. Latter end, to which they were obstinately rushing, *i.e.*, destruction if not averted. (*Ver. 30*) Chase. If wise, conquest would be easy and the promise (*Lev. xxvi. 8*) fulfilled. But abandoned for their apostasy



"sold" and "delivered up." (Ver. 31) Their rock gods in whom heathens trust, were felt to be unequal to Israel's God or Rock. Judees. "Having experienced so often the formidable might of God, they knew for a certainty that the God of Israel was very different from their own idols."—(Calvin). Their vine worse than the vine of Sodom, universally corrupt, like Sodom and Gomorrah in wickedness. Bitter (cf. 2 Kings iv. 39-41; Is. v. 2-4; Jer. ii. 21). Figures which express that "nothing could be imagined worse, or more to be abhorred than that nation."—(Calvin).

34-43. God's purpose to have mercy upon Israel when chastened and humbled. This wickedness before mentioned and judgments upon it. Store remembered and sealed up in a bag as a treasure carefully kept (Job xiv. 17; Hos. xiii. 17). Vengeance, active vindication of authority. Slide, they will totter and fall, firm as they think themselves to be (Ps. xxxviii. 17; xciv. 18). (Ver. 36) Judge (cf. Ps. cxxxv. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 17). Repent himself, have compassion, help them. None, proverbial for all men (cf. 1 Kings xiv. 10; xxi. 21; 2 Kings iv. 8; xiv. 6), bond and free; none to help. (Ver. 37) Idols utterly worthless, to which Israel had brought sacrifices and drink offerings. Rise up (Jer. ii. 28). (Ver. 39) "See now that I, I am." Experience enough to convince them that idols were impotent and that Jehovah alone should be feared. Kill (1 Sam. ii. 6; 2 Kings v. 7). God smites and heals (Job v. 17; Hos. vi. 1; Is. xxx. 26; lvii. 17). (Vers. 40-42) These verses are closely connected. The full stop in the A.V. at the end of verse 40 should be removed, and the passage should run thus: *For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, as I live for ever, if I whet, etc.* In verse 40, in which God is describing as swearing by Himself (cf. Is. xlv. 23; Jer. xxii. 5; Heb. vi. 17). The lifting up of the hand was a gesture used in making oath (cf. Gen. xiv. 22; Rev. x. 5, 6).—(Speak. Com.) (Ver. 43) Rejoice in God's retribution upon enemies in his wiping out the guilt which rested upon people and land and thus exterminating idolatry.

44-52. A supplement added by the author, who inserted the song to the law. Hoshea (Num. xiii. 16). Set, give serious attention. Life (ver. 47), basis of all enjoyments and length of life. (Ver. 48) Self-same day on which Moses rehearsed this song, and on which announcement of death renewed (Num. xxvii. 12-14). "In form this repetition differs from previous announcement, partly in the fact that the situation of Mount Nebo is more fully described (in the land of Moab, etc., as in chap. i. 5; xxviii. 69), and partly in the continued use of the imperative and a few other trifling points. These differences may all be explained from the fact that the account here was not written by Moses himself."—(Delitz).

### THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION.—Verses 1-6.

The metaphors of this inimitable song of singular beauty, very suggestive and powerful. In many ways is the importance of Divine instruction set forth.

I. By its lofty theme. Israel's God is made known in wonderful attributes. "I will publish the name of the Lord. 1. *Perfect in character.* No injustice and iniquity found in him. A rock of omnipotence and immutability. Perfect in holiness, word and work. A God of truth—we charge God foolishly, but He never errs, forgets nor retracts. "He cannot lie." "Our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." 2. *Glorious in majesty.* "Greatness," royal splendour and power must be ascribed to him. We cannot add to His greatness. His perfections are infinite. We may acknowledge it and give Him glory due to His name. It is not the bright light of eternity, but the glory seen in the perfection of His works, the faithfulness of His word and the wisdom of His administration. 3. *Righteous in government.* "All His ways are judgment," mysterious and incomprehensible, but "the ways of the Lord are right." (Hos. xiv. 9). 4. *Immutable in purpose.* We are inconstant and foolish, He unchangeable in plan, counsel and ways. "With whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning."

II. By its adaptation to our moral condition. We need such a God to redeem and comfort, in whom we may trust and live. 1. As "the thirsty earth" (Ps. lxxii. 6). We need the rain, divine influence to soften our hearts and lives. We are barren and unfruitful in the works and ways of God. Ignorant of His truth and will, until "the doctrine drops as rain." 2. As "the grass," we require fertilising showers to refresh, quicken and cause the seeds of

knowledge to grow. This doctrine of God is like the dew, gentle and insinuating, powerful and productive. The word "shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, etc." (Is. lv. 10, 11).

**III. By its interested witnesses.** Heaven and earth appealed to as august spectators. Such appeals often in matters of high importance (Ps. l. 3, 4; Is. i. 2; Jer. xxii. 29). This not a splendid instance of poetical apostrophe, but indicative of an interested universe. A summons to all intelligent beings to listen to the grand truths unfolded by this inspired ode. The doctrine concerns all mankind and should be known by all mankind. If neglected heaven and earth will witness to their stupidity and disobedience. "Heaven shall reveal his iniquity and the earth shall rise up against him" (Job xx. 27).

**IV. By its benevolent design.** A charge is made against Israel, whose character was the reverse of that of Jehovah, whose condition was helpless and deplorable. God deals in rectitude and love, and the writer is an example in tender expostulation and heavenly aim, to the poet and the minister. 1. *To impart wisdom.* "O! foolish people and unwise." Doubly foolish in forsaking God, who bought, made and established them. "Fools indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such necessary dependence. To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities." "Who hath bewitched (fascinated, demented) you?" Gal. iii. 1. 2. *To rectify judgment.* "A perverse and crooked generation." Perverted, froward, and untractable in thought and purpose; crooked, irregular and disorderly in life. God seeks to enlighten and correct them. "That ye may be blameless and harmless (sincere) in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine, as lights (luminaries or beacons) in the world" (Phil. ii. 15). 3. *To restore the divine image.* Likeness to God is the characteristic of His children. Sin defiles and degrades as spots in the face or dirt on the garment. It corrupts and destroys like putrefaction in the body. Grace delivers from sin, restores the divine image and makes us "sons of God." 4. *To kindle fervent gratitude.* Israel's base return for redemption and advancement, innumerable privileges and unprecedented honours. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" We condemn the Jews, yet imitate their conduct. God has delivered and exalted us, yet we do not feel that gratitude is required, reasonable and just. God daily loads with benefits that we may render in return (Ps. cxvi. 12). Appeals to our sense of right for a natural and willing return for mercies so constant and so great.

#### THE REVELATION OF GOD.—Verses 4-6.

The doctrine of this song is a revelation concerning God. A declaration of his name—a name expressing his qualities and distinguishing him from all other gods. This name must be *published*, for if the name drop out of use, the being who owns it may be forgotten. 1. *In the splendour of his perfections.* *Jehovah* the Great I am—independent and self-existent. The infinite, eternal and immutable God. Perfectly just and infinitely holy. Each attribute is capable of distinct contemplation. All blended together constitute divine excellence, like colours of light in the rainbow. 2. *In the rectitude of his moral government.* "His ways are judgment," that is accord with rectitude. He is essentially and absolutely just. *Reason* asserts that he can have no motive for injustice. Deeply fixed in the centre of *conscience* is this truth. The *Bible* continually sets forth that "there is no unrighteousness in him." "Just and right is he," in person and procedure. "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." 3. *In the assertion of his rights.* "Is not he thy father that hath bought thee?" 1. *Rights as Creator.*—"Hath he not

made thee?" 2. *Rights as a Covenant God.* "Thy father."—We owe to him homage, love and obedience. "Thou O Lord, art our Father and Redeemer, thy name is for everlasting" (Is. lxiii. 16). Let us think of God as here revealed, the absolute and the relative God, until our hearts are stirred to gratitude, reverence and devotion. "Behold God is great and we know Him not."

Return, my senses, range no more abroad,  
He only finds his bliss who seeks for God.

—Parnell.

### THE DEW OF THE WORD.—Ver. 2.

"Distil as the dew." Who hears the dew fall? What microphone could reveal that music to our "gross unpurged ears?" *The dew distills in silence.* So does the speech of God. In stillness God's love is condensed into dewlike communications; not read, nor heard, but known by direct power of the spirit upon the soul. Not much in noise, turmoil, and bustle. Dew falls in wider silence, in quiet places of sorrow and sickness; more in the desert than in hot harvest fields or neat gardens, from which we have been called. *The dew distills in darkness.* Not in the darkness of external trial merely, but in times when we cannot see anything; when we do not seem to be walking in darkness, but, like Micah, "*sit* in darkness," too feeble even to grope; times of reaction and weariness after special work, after great or exciting success, even after unusually vivid spiritual blessing. You look out some dark night: there is no storm, no rain, not the least token to your senses of what is going on. In the morning you see every blade and leaf tipped with a dew drop, everything revived and freshened, prepared for the heat of the day. So His words fall on your souls in darkness, not with sensible power; nothing flashes out from the page, nothing shines to shed pleasant light on your path. You do not hear sound of abundance of rain, but the words are distilling as the dew and preparing you for day. *The dew falls* not in one mass of water, but innumerable *little drops*. What one drop does not reach another does. It is not one overwhelmingly powerful word which does this holy night work in the soul, but the unrealized influences of many, dropping softly on the plants of the Lord; one resting here, another there; one touching an unrecognised need, another reaching an unconsciously failing grace. "Each drop uncounted hath its own mission, and is duly sent to its own leaf or blade." Sometimes God's dew *goes on falling many hours of night*. Watches seem long and starlight does not reveal it. But none is lost; some is already doing hidden work as it falls around the very roots of our being, some ready to be revealed in sparkling brightness when the night is over; lessons learnt among the shadows to be lived out in the sunshine. *The object* of the dew is *to maintain life* in dry places and seasons. In rainless regions this better understood. Any dry week in summer we see enough to understand the beauty of the figure. This speech is spirit and life to souls, however feebly, yet really alive to God. Dew does nothing for stones, nor a dead leaf. It falls on little fading plants, whose leaves absorb life, renewing moisture, and closed blossoms open out again with fresher fragrance than before. Dryness is more to be dreaded than darkness. Be trustfully content to let the dew fall in the dark. Believe the Word, when you read the dim page or lie still through long hours of the night, with no power to meditate on half-recollected verses that cross the mind and leave no influence.—*F. R. Havergal.*

Softly the dew in the evening descends,  
Cooling the sun-heated ground and the gale;  
Flow'rets all fainting it soothingly tends,  
Ere the consumings of mid-day prevail.  
Sweet, gentle dewdrops, how mystic you fall,  
Wisdom and mercy float down in you all.

—Rev. W. H. Havergal, *Last Hymn*, 1870.



## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 2. *My doctrine.* 1. Its nature.—Rain, dew, small rain, and showers. 2. Its operations. Drop, distil. *Rain, emblem of Holy Spirit.* 1. A timely blessing. When inheritance is weary. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." 2. Bestowed in special seasons. "Early and latter rain" In youth and manhood in conversion and maturity. 3. Beneficial in results. Softens earth and prepares it for seed. "Thou makest it soft with showers." "Thou, O God, didst send (shake out) a plentiful (gracious) rain, whereby thou didst confirm (refreshedst) it, when it was weary, Ps. lxviii. 9.

*Dew, an emblem.* 1. In origin. "As a dew from the Lord that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." 2. In method of operations, (a) silently and imperceptibly. Not with observation, not in "the thunder of his power"; (b) Efficiently and beautifully. Vigour and freshness to the Church, "the dew unto Israel." Not in sweeping, destructive showers, but in gentle, penetrating influence; (c) resulting in good or evil. The savour of life or of death—cursing or blessing, Heb. vi., 7. "My speech, etc. My familiar, friendly, and affectionate speeches, shall descend gently and softly on the ear and heart, as the dew moistening and refreshing all around. In hot regions dew is often a substitute for rain; without it no fertility, where rain seldom falls. In such places only can the metaphor here used be felt in its perfection."—A. Clarke. No doubt these various expressions point out that great variety in the Word or Revelation of God, whereby it is suited to every place, occasion, person and state; "being profitable for doctrine, reproof, and edification in righteousness."—Ibid.

Ver. 4. *God a rock.* 1. *An immovable foundation for hope.* Foundations of rocks, hidden, unsearchable to mortal eye, depths past finding out.

2. *An abiding security.* Protection and safety from burning, heat of the sun and hostile invasion of enemies. "A hiding place from the wind, covert from the tempest," &c. (Is. xxxii. 2.) "An image of God's omnipotent power, immutable purpose, faithfulness in mercy, truth and love," Ps. cxix. 89, 90. "A firm and everlasting refuge, a 'Rock of Ages,' Is. xxvi. 4. One age passeth away, and another, and a third, etc., but the rock remains. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Prov. xviii. 10); "munition of rocks" (Is. xxxiii. 16); "rocks so deep no pioneer can undermine them; so thick, no cannon can pierce them; so high, no ladder can scale them" (Trapp).

Ver. 5. *Spots of God's children.* Impatience, anger, idolatry, sectarian bitterness and prejudices, etc. *Sin generally.* 1. Spots of deepest dye. Not on surface, but ingrained like leopard's spots and Ethiopian's skin. 2. Spots which corrupt—all flesh corrupt—universal prevalence of disease, "the whole head sick and the heart faint," voluntary debasement and death. 3. Spots which cannot be washed away by man. Not even "with nitre" and "much sope," Jer. ii., 22. Only the blood of Christ can take away the stain and make whiter than snow."

Ver. 6. *Requite.* Ingratitude for mercies innumerable, distinguished, affectionate, and long continued. "Good turns aggravate unkindness, and our guilt is increased by our obligations. It is ingratitude that makes a godly man's sin so heinous, which otherwise would be far less than other men's, since his temptations are stronger and his resistance greater." Trapp. *Thy father?* Consider. I. That God sustains a fatherly relation towards us. See him our Father in: 1. The work of Creation. 2. The redemptive plan. 3. The workings of Providence. II. That as such we

owe him peculiar duties: 1. As our Father we ought to be like him. 2. We ought to obey him. 3. We ought to love him. III. That this relationship involves certain duties with regard to our fellow men. They are of the same family as we are. Then there should be: 1. Family union; 2. Family correspondence; 3. Family love. (*Bib. Museum.*)

#### RECOLLECTION OF PAST MERCIES.—*Verses 7-14.*

“Remember days of old,” from the beginning until now what God has done—Proper review, true enquiry into past history will lead to gratitude and trust.

I. Special inheritance allotted to Israel by Divine Wisdom. God the Great Proprietor made and peopled the earth. 1. *To each nation He assigned its portion.* “Divided to the nations their inheritance.”—From the sons of Noah separate nations were formed (Gen. x. 32). In growth and settlement they were not left to chance, permitted to scramble, nor to prey one upon another. Powerful states should never invade weak ones. Forced acquisitions are unjust, insecure; become sources of restlessness, corruption and revolt. “He hath determined the bounds of their habitation” (Acts xvii. 26). 2. *To Israel He had special reference in this arrangement.* Placed in the midst of the earth, Canaan was admirably suited for their residence. From this common centre, the report of God’s wonders and the glad tidings of salvation were easily spread to every part of the globe. 3. *In this arrangement the interests of the people themselves were secured.* The land gradually gained—its tribes depossessed “according to the number of the children of Israel.” They were preserved—became the most favoured, the most important nation upon earth. By position, training and divine wisdom made depositaries of revealed religion and prepared the world for the Messiah.

II. Special Honour conferred upon Israel by Divine choice. They were the Lord’s portion, and the lot of his inheritance. “The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for a peculiar treasure” (Ps. cxxxv. 4). Separated from heathens, elevated by privileges they were chosen “a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut. vii. 6). Others were aliens, they were children, sons of God. Honours bestowed, special relationship indicate obligation to God. We are not to engross divine favours, but intended to be mediums, diffusers of it; not only to be blessed ourselves, but to be blessings to others. “I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”

III. Special training of Israel by Divine Grace. The beautiful figure sets forth Jehovah’s care and method of training his people. 1. *He sought them in solitude.* What sovereign grace! Few and lonely God desired and chose them. “At this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” 2. *He instructed them in ignorance.* Cut off from surrounding nations, God alone taught them: in laws and ordinances, rulers and prophets, events painful and pleasing. “He gave also his good spirit to instruct them” (Neh. ix. 20). 3. *He guarded them in journeys.* Led them about, not in the most direct, but in zigzag way, backwards and forwards. None are carried to heaven, directed in the way without hindrance, deflection and trouble. “I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths they have not known.” 4. *He preserved them in danger.* “He kept him.” He healed the serpent’s bite; defended in assault; frustrated divination and enchantment; “reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” 5. *Trained them in love.* God’s

diligence and tender compassion set forth. As the least touch of the eye would be painful, so God feels when the humblest is illused, afflicted or assailed. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

**IV. Special exaltation of Israel by Divine Providence.** "He made him ride, etc." In Egypt they were oppressed and enslaved; in Canaan exalted and honoured. 1. *In victory over our enemies.* "With a high hand" were redeemed (Ex. xiv. 8); and by the might of God did they conquer numerous foes. "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." 2. *In superabundant provision.* "The fields gave their increase and the rock its honey; oil from olives on rocky clefts, butter of kine and milk of sheep; lambs well-fed and cattle of finest breed; bread of the finest wheat and drink of purest grape "that he might eat." Most abundant, most fruitful are the rewards of obedience. The service of God is a land of beauty and productiveness. "He maketh peace in thy borders and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Ps. xvii. 4-14; lxxxi. 16).

### THE ROYAL SIMILITUDE.—Verse 11.

The king of birds combines more admirable qualities than any other fowl, and forms a royal similitude. It has strength to mount above all, swiftness to outstrip all, an eye that penetrates the very fountain of light, affection that draws forth its blood for its young, and a sagacity almost human in instructing and disciplining them, which is specially noted in our text.

Notice four things without doing violence to the similitude. 1. God uses Divine *admonitions*. "As the eagle stirreth up her nest." When time for young to leave nest, she moves it with gentleness and affection; she sees them sleeping, and unwilling to leave their first home, makes a noise, strikes her wings against surrounding branches, and then, having awakened them, disturbs them still further, and finally "stirreth up," turns the nest inside out, and compels them to take to crags of rocks, or boughs of trees. Thus did God to Israel, by moving the heart of Pharaoh against them when at ease by the flesh-pots of Egypt. God now stirs up his people, who are unwilling to think of better things, and refuse to hear the call, "Rise and come away." Sickness and death invade the dwelling, a darling child blighted in bud, or husband or wife dies in vigour of life, yet in vain. The sails of commerce rent; business blighted, schemes frustrated, and property wasted, to destroy the nest. God admonishes by knocking the world from under them, and places them in altitude to look for a better. "Arise, this is not your rest." 2. God uses Divine *allurements*. The eagle "fluttereth over her young," "hovers over them, and excites them to imitate her, and take their flight."—*Cruden*. Thus the Lord moved Israel to leave Egypt, and thus speaks of their restoration from Babylon, and their conversion to Christ. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness" (Hos. ii. 14, 15). He declares unwillingness that any should perish, reveals anxiety, and more than parental love for our salvation. Like the eagle rising to the sun, the Lord Jesus teaches us to rise to a better, brighter world. Enough in the Gospel to woo from sin and the world. Can you find a better portion than God and heaven?

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,  
Thy better portion trace,  
Rise from transitory things  
Towards heaven, thy destined place.

**3. God assures of Divine assistance.** "When the eagle sees its young weary or fearful, it takes them upon its back and carries them."—*Cruden*. God "bare



Israel on eagle's wings, and brought them unto himself" (Ex. xix. 4). So strength is made perfect in weakness; God upholds and makes grace sufficient. But as the eagle "rejects as unnatural" its young that do not fix their eyes upon the bright orb of day, and rise, so God may swear "they shall not enter into my rest." 4. God promises Divine *protection*. The eagle bears its young on its wings for protection as well as aid. The archer must first penetrate the body of the old bird before he can touch the young. Naturally it is more out of danger than other birds when in its proper element; security is doubled when on its mother's wings. Difficult to kill an eagle. If down on earth, with its head on turf, and longer at fountains, then a noble mark and easy prey. Just as the heaven-born soul, if in his proper place, and after his proper object, is out of reach of the wicked—above the world, with its pomps and vanities, which fade away in the distance—fiery darts of Satan must penetrate Jehovah's wings before they touch him. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." We see, then, why God disturbs with the ills of life that we may obey his call. He sends winds and rain, takes away the warm down of earthly comforts, and pulls down our tabernacles, that we may leave to dwell in mansions above.—*Rev. William Jackson.*

**GOD'S WORK OF GRACE IN THE REDEMPTION OF MAN.—Verses 10–12.**

**I. The Condition of the Sinner.** Set forth in expressive terms. 1. In a *distant* state. If *found* he must be lost. Lost to God, of no service to him; to self, missing the great end of life; to others, of no benefit, but injurious. 2. In a *barren* state—"a desert place." The world, the unregenerate soul, a moral waste, sterile without God. 3. In a *dangerous* state. "Howling wilderness," great, terrible, and filled with "fiery serpents" (Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6). Howling with the roar of beasts and the blasts of tempest. 4. In a *hopeless* state. Away from the camp and company of God. Without a star in heaven or a footprint on earth. Fit emblem of the wretched, unregenerate condition of the sinner.

**II. The Method of Deliverance.** Strikingly illustrative of God's method of redeeming men. 1. *God seeks.* "He *found* him." He seeks *discovers* men in departure and sin. "Adam, where art thou?" His people are "sought out" (Is. lxii. 12). "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." 2. *God guides.* "He led him." When he seeks he is sure to find, bring to himself, guide through life and duty to heaven. "I did know (care for thee and love) thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought" (Hos. xiii. 5.)

**III. The Place of Destination.** "A land flowing with milk and honey," "the city of habitation." No home, no rest nor shelter in the wilderness. A country prepared and in reserve. God brings the believer into a large and wealthy place of highest hopes and joys—a place where unpropitious circumstances yield unexpected blessings. But heaven the fulfilment, the perfection of all.

From verses 11, 12 learn—

**I. Needful disturbance.** "As an eagle stirreth up her nest." 1. As to our outward condition in the world. 2. As to our selfrighteous confidence. 3. As to our departure from life.

**II. Divine example.** "Fluttereth over her young" to exite and teach them by example. The eye does more than the ear. God must be seen by example

of parents, teachers and ministers. God in Christ, humanised example. Render religion attractive that men may *see* it.

And as the bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies;  
Employ each art, reprove each dull delay,  
Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.

**III. All sufficient assistance.** "Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." This to aid and secure them. Not always aware of her design, away she sails with them and shakes them off her wings. She follows after, hovers near them, and when their pinions flag and they cannot fly, she darts and places herself under them, prevents their fall, succours their weakness and refreshes them for another flight. Our dependence is entire, but "our sufficiency is of God."

**IV. God's sole agency.** "So the *Lord* alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." God conforms himself to our modes of apprehension and expression. This necessary, but not degrading. He speaks unto us as unto children, with whom imitation is everything; and levies a tax upon the world of nature to furnish images of himself. He assumes relation of parents, the affection of a father, the tenderness of a mother. He borrows images from animals, and especially the feathered tribes. "As a hen gathereth her chickens." Observe a divine agency—the *Lord* led him. See also exclusive application of this work. "The *Lord* alone did lead him." A resemblance of the manner in which it was done. "So the *Lord*, etc." How? "As an eagle stirreth up, etc." Three things here ascribed to the mother eagle, not in providing for her young, but in educating them—in teaching them to fly she stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth her wings, taketh them and beareth them on her wings. This applicable to God in dealing with us, and preparing as to seek things above.—(*Condensed from Jay.*)

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 8, 9. *The most high divided nations.* 1. God originally divided nations their inheritance. 2. Divine purpose is revealed in this division. 3. Israel was discovered and distinguished from all other nations. A nation, the depository of God's will, from which the Church and the Christ were to spring. Recognise a brother in every human being, for "God has made of one blood all nations upon the face of the earth." In the worst of times God has preserved a few for himself.

Ver. 9. *The Lord's portion.* His purchase. 2. His conquest. 3. His glory. 4. His heirs. *The value God sets upon His people.* As bought by blood, regenerated by grace, and designed for heaven. "What an astonishing saying. As holy souls take God for their portion, so God takes them for His portion.

They are infinitely happy in and satisfied with God; He represents Himself as happy in them. This is what is implied on being a *saint*. He who seeks an earthly portion has little commerce with the Most High."—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 10. I. The primary application of the text as a summary of all that had been suffered by the Israelites, and all that had been done by God on their behalf. II. The peculiar manner in which it adapts itself to our own times and to our own cases. 1. We have the picture of the believer in his natural state, in a desert land. 2. In his regenerate state, found of God, and instructed. 3. In his guarded state. "Kept."—*Hy. Melvill.*

Ver. 11. *The method of Divine training.* I. Its object. To secure

development of our own powers, by action wise, divinely prompted, self-reliant, and adapted to constitution and circumstances. II. The means. Gentle, affectionate, stimulating, and exemplary. "The purpose of life is

development; the process of development is discipline; the result of discipline is a full and many-sided manhood."

For human weal, Heaven husbands all events.

### ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE, APOSTACY AND PUNISHMENT.—*Verses 15-25.*

Israel requited God for benefits, by forsaking him, and serving worthless idols. God is offended by their conduct and resolves to punish.

**I. Base Ingratitude to God.** "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" The heathens deemed ingratitude a sin so great as to include every other. Lyncurgus asked why his laws did not notice it, replied, "I have left it to the gods to punish." 1. *Ingratitude displayed in self-indulgence.* "Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick." 2. *Ingratitude begetting pride.* "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled and their hearts were exalted, therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos. xiii. 6). 3. *Ingratitude ending in rebellion.* "Waxed fat and kicked." Like pampered and well-fed cattle they grew insolent, became wanton and ungovernable. "They were disobedient and rebelled against Thee and cast Thy law behind their backs" (Neh. ix. 25).

**II. Shameful Apostacy from God.** "Then he forsook God who made him." Departure from God a tendency in fallen nature. But the sin is aggravated by light, privileges and advantages of instruction. 1. *Forsaking God who made them.* No regard to our Creator, no thought for the end of our being. How deplorable to ignore our maker—source of intelligence and joy—"in whom we live and move and have our being." 2. *Sacrificing to gods which cannot help them.* Gods which were strange, new and vanities—Gods whom their fathers feared not and to whom they owed no obligation whatever—Gods termed "abominations" and "devils," repulsive in their nature and destructive in their influence. 3. *Exciting to jealousy God who loved them.* "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods." "This jealousy," says Calvin, "rests upon sacred and spiritual marriage tie, by which God had bound the people to Himself."

**III. Terrible punishment from God.** God will severely visit his people for their apostacy. "The Lord saw it," abhorred and resolved to reject Israel. This punishment is set forth in the form of righteous judgment—Retribution not always *adequate*, nor *invariable*, but real and manifest—an instinct of justice in the divine nature, a law of providence and of conscience. "Be sure your sin will find you out." 1. *They had offended God and other nations should offend them.* "A foolish nation" would provoke them to anger (ver. 21). A people whom they deemed foolish, or who really were foolish though they thought themselves wise, would eventually be received against their wish. 2. *They had provoked God, and God would provoke them to jealousy.* Gentile nations, whom they despised, not only conquered them and became their masters, but entered a covenant from which they were excluded (cf. Matt. xxi. 43; Rom. x. 19). 3. *They had rejected God, and God would reject them.* "I will hide my face from them" (ver. 20). God would withdraw his favour and transfer it to a despised nation. As they had turned their back upon him he would turn his back upon them (cf. Jer. xviii. 17; ii. 27). They thought lightly of God, forsook him and then made substitutes for him. A picture of sin's progress, the sinner's folly and the way to righteous judgment.



DIVINE ANGER.—*Verses 19-27.*

These may be figurative expressions, but cannot be explained away, to make the Supreme Being incapable of feeling against sin and the sinner, destitute of pleasure or displeasure, without concern for His glory, or the welfare of the universe.

**I. The anger of God is caused by the sins of men.** "They have provoked me to anger." It exists in Divine perfections, and is manifest in Divine government. God's eye is a flame of fire, and its lofty jealousy rests upon every form of sin, negative and positive. "For the wrath of God is revealed (displayed in judicial vengeance) against all ungodliness (impiety, non-recognition of God) and unrighteousness (deviations from truth and moral rectitude) of men" (Rom. i. 18).

**II. Execution of anger is reserved to God Himself.** "I will provoke," "I will move," agent's secondary causes. God is the avenger. We are not to usurp His place, and recompense evil for evil. He knows how to punish without passion, and without injustice. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

**III. Anger, when roused in God, is terrible in its effects.** Most severe judgments are threatened (vers. 22-25). 1. *Judgments extensive in operation.* Sweeping the earth, penetrating the lowest hell, and like a fire of universal conflagration. 2. *Judgments irresistible in might.* "Set on fire the foundations of mountains." Strong fortresses subverted, holy cities destroyed, and the Jewish Constitution overturned. "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath," *i.e.*, equal to all that a man can fear from it (Ps. xc. 11). 3. *Judgments destructive in results.* Swept together, heaped up, and falling upon young men and maidens, children and old men—swift as arrows, and hot as fire; in the field and in the home destruction came. It falls upon men like wild beasts upon victims—to crush, destroy, and carry in triumph. This is not an overdrawn picture of the danger and the anger of God against presumptuous sins. "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver"—

For guilt, no plea! to pain, no pause, no bound!  
Inexorable all! and all extreme.

—Young.

**IV. The anger of God is often restrained by mercy.** "Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy" (ver. 27). God can make a full end, but desires not the death of sinners. In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy. 1. *Restrained in regard for His own honour.* "Lest their adversaries should say, 'Our hand is high,'" etc. If God destroyed Israel, the enemy would take the credit to themselves—become proud and boastful. Hence He regards His own name; will not permit its profanation and pollution (*cf.* Ex. xxxii. 12; Numb. xiv. 13; Isa. x. 5). 2. *Restraint in the interests of His people.* Unworthy as they are, "a nation void of counsel," He was concerned for their welfare. (a) For their *protection*. Their adversaries would injure them, behave themselves strangely; but He defends, restrains the wrath of man, and causes remainder to praise Him. (b) For their *correction*. He desires to teach and make them wise (ver. 28). "My people is foolish; they have not known Me." (c) For their *continuance* (ver. 26). No desire to blot out their name, but to perpetuate their existence, honour, and bless them for ever.

THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY.—*Verses 15-18.*

Consider I. How men are affected by abundant prosperity in their social capacity, and with respect to their general worldly interests. History is full of instances to show how national character has deteriorated as the wealth and power of a nation have increased. II. How our churches are affected by such prosperity. Note the various religious errors of the century; antinomianism, &c. Note also the pride of enlightenment, which is the besetting temptation of the present day. III. How the injurious tendencies of long good fortune may be corrected. Let us: 1. Constantly recollect with gratitude the source and giver of our prosperity; 2. Use our resources and advantages as God intends they should be used; 3. Not desire prosperity for itself.—*A. Thomson, M.A.*

Another outline may be given.

I. Prosperity is not real happiness. *Nature* knows nothing of moral distinctions; treats all alike. But distinguished rank, long life, abundant wealth and ripe scholarship, do not satisfy inward craving. A millionaire may be miserable. "Prosperity is like salt water, the more you drink of it the thirstier you are" (*Talmage*).

II. Prosperity profits very little. The wealth of empires cannot add to stature of body or mind, nor secure health and virtue. It is insecure and exposes to envy. "Envious at the prosperity of the wicked." Earthly possessions—vanity—do not fill, protect nor continue.

III. Prosperity is spiritually dangerous. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," (Prov. i. 32.) 1. *In leading to self-dependence.* 2. *In begetting contempt for God.* "Lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." 3. *In causing apostasy for God.* "Then he forsook God." Guard against selfishness. Be watchful and humble. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 15. *Jeshurun*. A dishonoured name given to Israel several times (ch. xxxi. 16, xxxiii. 5, 26), meaning *upright, righteous*; a term also of endearment and indicating close relation to God. 1. *They forsook God*, who is just and right and had chosen them to walk in righteousness (Is. lxiv. 2.) "By placing the name of *righteous* before Israel, he censured ironically those who had fallen away from righteousness, and by thus reminding them with that dignity they had been endowed, he upbraided them with the more severity for their guilt of perfidy."—(*Calvin*). 2. *They degraded themselves*. Forsook the ways and the God of their fathers, became corrupt in manners, unworthy of confidence, and abominable in conduct. "A rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord." (Is. xxx. 9.) *Waxed fat and*

*kicked*. "The figure is admirably supported, through the whole verse. We see *first*, a miserable, lean steed, taken under the care and into the keeping of a master, who provides him with an abundance of provender. We see *secondly*, this horse waxing *fat* under this keeping. We see him *thirdly*, *breaking away* from his master, leaving his rich pasturage, and running to the wilderness, unwilling to bear the yoke or harness, or to make any returns for his master's care and attention. We see *fourthly*, whence this conduct proceeds, from a want of consciousness that his strength depends upon his master's keeping, and a lack of consideration that leanness and wretchedness must be the consequence of leaving his master's service and running off from his master's pasturage. How easy to apply these points to the

Israelites ! and how illustrative of their former and latter state ! and how powerfully do they apply to many called Christians, who having increased in riches, forget that God, from whose hand alone those mercies flowed."—*A. Clarke.*

**Ver. 17. Not to God.** 1. Man, a religious being, will worship, must have a God. "If there be no God, we must invent one," cried a leader in the French revolution. 2. Right conception of God restrains, elevates, and preserves. 3. When God is cast off, abominable wickedness and awful degradation ensues. Things that are no *Gods*, *devils* chosen as substitutes. "Saying to a stock, Thou art my father ; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth." (Jer. ii. 26.)

**Ver. 18. Unmindful.** 1. Men outwardly prosperous, but spiritually destitute. 2. Men enjoying every favour, but acknowledging no obligation to God. 3. An offence most unnatural, unreasonable, and provoking. "Thou hast forgotten the rock of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength." (Is. xvii. 10.) "My people have forgotten me days without number." (Jer. ii. 32.)

**Ver. 19. Lord saw.** Divine inspection of Human Life. 1. God remembers the sins of men. Remembrance minute, constant and universal. 2. Men think God is indifferent to their sins. Forget him in thought and disregard him in conduct. 3. When men disregard God in their ways, they become more sinful in their lives. Proud and corrupt, false and unjust, "children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord," Is. i. 4.

"For want of faith,  
Down the steep precipice of wrong he slides,  
There's nothing to support him in the right."  
—*Young.*

**Vers. 21-22. Mine anger.** 1. An element of wrath in Divine Government. 2. This wrath may overtake

men suddenly. 3. When it does overtake men they cannot escape. "When a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

**Vers. 23-25. God's arrows.** Judgments from the gods represented by arrows in Scripture and heathen writers. Apollo is pictured as bearing a bow and quiver full of deadly arrows, and in answer to prayer coming to smite the Greeks with pestilence (Hom. Il. I. v. 43). 1. *Innumerable in variety.* Famine, pestilence, wild beasts, poisonous reptiles, and war. 2. *Direct in their aim.* Never fall on wrong persons, never miss the mark. 3. *Deadly in their effect.* Wounds of poisoned arrows intensely painful and internal. No greater suffering than arrows "sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies," (Ps. xlv. 5). "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit (destroying vital energy, certain death)" (Job vi. 4).

**Vers. 26-27. Influence of Man's conduct on the Divine Mind.** If God sees, he must, speaking after the manner of man, feel and act. I. *Man's sin rouses Divine opposition.* God's anger not a passion but a principle, not against existence but against the sins and sufferings of existence. Opposition, hatred and sin revealed in judgment upon individuals and communities. II. *Man's sin restrains Divine procedure.* Jealousy indicates love. "The wrath of God," says Meyer, "is the holy love of God (who is neither neutral nor one-sided in his affection) for all that is good in its energy is antagonistic to all that is evil." "The expression the *wrath of God* simply embodies this truth that the relations of God's love to the world are unsatisfied, unfulfilled. The expression is not merely anthropopathic, it is an appropriate description of the Divine pathos necessarily involved in the conception of a revelation of love, restrained, hindered and stayed through unrighteousness" (*Martensen's Christian Dog.*) 1. If not loved and obeyed he feels wronged,



therefore does not show mercy. 2. If wronged or insulted he does not revenge himself, lest the enemy should rejoice, his people be destroyed, and his glory tarnished. Let the righteous

hope, the wicked tremble, for Divine wrath is only *partially* poured out in this world. It will be perfectly displayed in the final judgment.

### MARKS OF WISDOM.—Verses 28–30.

God complains of Israel's folly. If they had been more considerate, wiser, they would have foreseen and avoided evil. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

I. Wisdom gives understanding in the events of life. Wise men value and improve life. Their wisdom is not intuitional, abstract, and speculative. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). Hence it is sound and practical; fixed on a right end (Phil. iii. 13), and regulated by right principle (Ps. cxix. 105). The prudent man regards the events of life, discerns the signs of the times, learns coming judgments from the Word of God, and prepares to meet them. It is reckless folly to walk blindly, carelessly, in the midst of greatest evils. "Men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. xii. 32).

II. Wisdom is superior to natural strength in the conflicts of life. "One chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (ver. 30). A few taught by God are "mightier than they in arms." As Gideon (Judges vii. 22) and David's worthies (2 Sam. xxiii. 8). "Knowledge is power" is Bacon's famous aphorism. Physical and mechanical forces increase the power of man. Intellect wisely applied gives moral ascendancy. But "a wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength" (Prov. xxiv. 5); by faith and dependence upon God "puts to flight the armies of the aliens." "The battle is not to the strong." "Wisdom is better than strength." "Athanasius against the world!" "Wisdom is better than weapons of war" (Eccles. ix. 18).

III. Wisdom leads to consideration of the end of life. "That they would consider their latter end" (ver. 29). We know not the end, but it will come. To each, time will close. The *last* day, the most solemn of all, fast approaches. Instinct leads animals to prepare for the future. Worldly wisdom urges readiness for emergency. God loudly speaks in Providence, and warns in Scripture. "O that they were wise." "Oh, that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways" (Ps. lxxxi. 13).

Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;  
Next day the fatal precedent will plead;  
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.

—Young.

### GOD'S REPROOF OF HUMAN FOLLY.—Verses 28, 29.

I. As a fact men are extremely foolish. Sinners are shortsighted, regardless of the inevitable consequences of their conduct. 1. *They are wilfully ignorant.* "That they understood." We are naturally ignorant, limited in thought and being; but not forced to err and sin. Ignorance may be removed by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. But the careless worldling, immersed in pleasure and playing with trifles, is a man without understanding, and like the beasts that perish. Wilful ignorance is the centre of all evil and the precursor of ruin. "Fools die for want of wisdom" (Prov. x. 21). 2. *They are strangely conceited.* Trust to reason; resist Divine teaching because authoritative and practical and would be their own guides. "Vain man (empty and ignorant) would be wise"

(Job xi. 12), forgets that all knowledge is disjointed, partial, and worthless, without the fear of God. Sages of antiquity "professing themselves wise became fools" (Rom. i. 22). "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. xxvi. 12). 3. *They are habitually indifferent.* Accustomed to sin, deaf to the voice of God; nothing stirs or restrains. Rooted habit has become ruling principle. The heart not kept, thoughts not rightly centered, control is lost over actions. "O that they would consider!"

II. *God seeks to make foolish men wise.* He does not compel, but reproves, expostulates. Wisdom in its very nature cannot be given by force. "Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding." 1. *By striking providences.* Such mentioned here (vers. 24, 25). Affliction and misfortune, inward darkness, distress, and insanity. Providences which alarm and make us think. Providences which create joy and gratitude. all overruled for good and designed to instruct. 2. *By inspired teaching.* The Bible, an inspired guide, declares the providence and justice of God. A teacher unerring, free, and common to all. "Written for our learning," and recording events which are warnings. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples (types), and they are written for our admonition, &c." (1 Cor. x. 11). "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!"

#### THE CONSIDERATION OF DEATH.—*Verse 29.*

I. Take account of the general insensibility of men to the grand fact that they are mortal. Note: 1. How little effect the fact that whole races are dead since the beginning of time till now has upon us. 2. How seldom we are struck with the reflection that many things and small things too might cause our death. 3. How soon a recovery from danger sets aside the serious thought of death. 4. How schemes are formed for a long future time, without any thought of possible death. II. See what can be brought in explanation of this. 1. The insertion in the human mind, by the Creator of a principle counteractive in some degree to the influence of this prospect of death. 2. The fearful, radical depravity of our nature. 3. The perfect distinctness of life and death. 4. Even the certainty and universality of death. 5. Our utter inability to form any defined idea of the manner of existence after death. 6. A general presumption of having long to live. 7. The endeavours of men, by occupying their whole thoughts with other things, to preclude a thought of their end. III. Briefly remonstrate against it. To end our life is the mightiest event that awaits us in this world, and it is that which we are living but to come to. To have been thoughtless of it, then, will ultimately be an immense calamity. (*John Foster*).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Vers. 28, 29. *The Folly of Men.*  
I. Men are not wise. 1. They prefer shadows to substance, worldly happiness. "What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue" (*Burke*). 2. They avoid not danger when before them. 3. Admit facts, yet live as if they were not facts. II. God's provision to make men wise. Life the school of God, who provides teachers and gives lessons. 1. In tender appeal. 2. In wonderful events. In patience, perseverance and affection, "who teaches like him?"

Ver. 29. *Latter End.* End of certain actions, end of sin, end of life generally considered not. "What will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 31). "She remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully (in a startling, singular way)" (Lam. i. 9).

"Heaven gives the needful, but neglected call,  
What day, what hour, but knocks at human hearts,  
To wake the soul to sense of future scenes."

GOD A ROCK OF CONFIDENCE.—*Verse 31.*

The gods of the heathen not wise, powerful and gracious, like Jehovah. Enemies and friends can prove that He alone is worthy of confidence.

I. Men chose a rock in whom to have confidence. Wealth, the world and our fellow-creatures. Friends lack sympathy, prove unfaithful and pass away, confidences vain and false, abound and disappoint. Broken reeds which fail, pierce and wound the hand that leans upon them (Is. xxxvi. 6).

II. God alone is worthy of confidence. A rock the most abiding and unchanging object in nature. God the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. None like him proved. 1. By testimony of friends. Who enjoy shelter, comfort and rest. "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?" "Not any rock like our God" (1 Sam. ii. 2). 2. By the testimony of enemies. "Our enemies themselves being judges." Compelled by dear experience to acknowledge God's power and supremacy. Egyptians (Ex. xiv. 25), Balak and Balaam (Num. xxiii.), Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 8). "O, Galilean, thou hast conquered!" was the forced confession of the Emperor.

III. God as a rock of confidence should be recommended to others. Accessible to all; no steep rugged height to climb to reach it—a fit shelter from the wind and covert from the tempest (Is. xxxii. 2). Millions sheltered and yet room. Blessedness beyond description to those who flee and find. "Blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted" (Ps. xviii. xxxi., 46; Is. xvii. 10).

DEMORALIZATION OF MEN.—*Verses 32, 33.*

I. In falling short of the end of Existence. Israel well-pleasing to God at first, a noble vine became a degenerate plant (Isa. v. 2-7; Jer. ii. 21). Like the vine of Sodom emblems of utter depravity (Isa. i. 10; Jer. xxiii. 14). Not merely frail, but morally corrupted, degraded; unprofitable and unable to answer the end of existence; not living "to the praise of his glory," but for selfish, useless ends. Sin is degradation of character, perversion of life's purpose. Other creatures fulfil their mission. All God's works praise him. But all men "have sinned" (Jew and Gentile, best and worst) and come short of (failed to attain to, disqualified for) the glory of God (Rom. i. 23).

II. In becoming pernicious in life. These terms most expressive, indicative of principles and practices most abominable. 1. *Offensive in character.* "Grapes of gall;" worse than wild grapes, bitter and vexatious to God and man. 2. *Mischievous in conduct.* "Poison of dragons," secreted malice, ready to dart forth upon others. "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent (to sting); adder's poison (most destructive) is under their lips" (Ps. cxl. 3; cf. Ps. lviii. 4; Rom. iii. 13). 3. *Fatal in influence.* Asps a species of snake whose bite is immediately fatal. "Nothing could be imagined worse or more to be abhorred than that nation" (Calvin). But this wickedness ripens for judgment. The thought of Sodom's destruction is suggested. Those who imitate Sodom bring forth the worst fruits of impiety, and will perish like Sodom. When great cities sink and great nations morally degenerate, they are doomed to judgments, righteous and complete overthrow. "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample (not an exception to the regular land of the Divine Government) unto those that after should live ungodly," (2 Pet. ii. 6.)



## GOD'S SUPREMACY IN THE WORLD.—*Verses 34-43.*

God is represented as killing and making alive (ver. 39); as judging men and punishing gods; as swearing to heaven and calling upon nations to rejoice in His supremacy.

**I. Supremacy asserted in the Physical World.** God is not quiescent but active in the world, "doing marvellous things without number." 1. *In appointing agents to maintain it.* All creatures under His command, mightiest and meanest; gods and men; the "glittering sword" and "arrows drunk with blood;" life and death. He arranges and directs all agencies to work in the circumstances, bodies and souls of men; in the departments of creation and the history of nations. 2. *In fixing times to display it.* Days of calamity and of joy. In "the wheel of nature" (Jas. iii. 6), in the revolutions of time, "to every thing there is a season." The world not ruled by chance, fate, or accident. Events most casual under control. Every work its part, and "a time to every purpose under heaven." "He changeth the times and the seasons." "God hath determined the times appointed" (Acts xvii. 26).

**II. Supremacy vindicated in the Moral World.** In the physical world law, abstract principles set up in opposition: in the moral, reason, heathen gods, "humanity," and the heavenly bodies. "The heavens do rule"—1. *In the experience of men.* Nebuchadnezzar's royal testimony, Belshazzar's judgment, and Napoleon's downfall. Man is subject to law as well as creation. "In whose hand is the soul (life) of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind (flesh of man)," Job. xii. 10. 2. *In the customs of society.* Social and religious—society is barbarous or civilised, progressive or stationary, degraded or elevated, as it recognises and depends upon God. 3. *In the history of nations.* God the Supreme Ruler and Proprietor. Nations increase as Rome, Israel, England, and America; or decay as Israel for its idolatry, Rome for its luxury, Spain for its persecutions—according to His purpose. The rise, growth, and ruin of nations with Him. "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again" (Job xii. 23).

**III. Supremacy in its influence in the world.** Two effects chiefly. 1. *A source of joy to God's people.* "Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people" (ver. 43). His rule is not lawless authority, tyrannical and evil, but just and benevolent. Hence "the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." 2. *A source of terror to his enemies.* "Render vengeance to his enemies" (ver. 43). When He "wounds" by loss (ver. 39); strikes according to the manner in which He swears (ver. 40); and becomes the archer and the arrow, who can resist? "Say to the righteous—it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked, etc." (Is. iii. 10, 11).

## VENGEANCE IN STORE.—*Verses 34-38.*

"*This*" (ver. 34) not only includes the sins of the nation, but also the judgment of God. The apostacy of Israel, as well as the consequent punishment, is laid up with God—sealed up in His treasures; therefore they have not yet actually occurred—an evident proof that we have prophecy before us, and not the description of an apostacy that had already taken place, and of punishment inflicted in consequence (*Keil*).

**I. In store, as a natural consequence of a sinful course.** Natural for sin to produce results—results destroyed, checked, or treasured up. Sins stored up in human conscience (Ps. li. 3) God's providence, and at day of judgment, (Rom. ii. 5). None lost or left unpunished—all repaid. "Dost thou not watch over my sin (to visit it)? My transgression is sealed up in a bag (as evidence preserved against me); and thou sewest up mine iniquity (to keep it carefully and punish it justly)," Job. xiv. 16. "The iniquity of Ephraim is *bound up*; his sin is hid." (Hos. xiii. 12).

**II. In store, to be revealed in due time.** Justice pledged to avenge broken law upon disobedient. Time and manner may be sealed up. Long suffering must not be taken for forgetfulness. "Recompense in due time." Retribution. 1. *Terrible*. "Kill," and none can make alive. 2. *Near*. "At hand." Instruments of judgment, like weapons of war, are "taken in hand." 3. *Swift*. "The things make haste." Judgment lingereth not (2 Pet. ii. 3). 4. *Certain*. "Shall come." "I will render vengeance." As surely as I live for ever.

**III. The revelation of stored up vengeance will be just and wise.** "True and righteous are His judgments." Restrained and educational; yet sufficient. 1. *To convince God's people of their folly*. In forsaking Him for idols which are vain and impotent—in relying upon earthly props which are destroyed—in showing Himself to be the arbiter of life and death. 2. *To warn the wicked of their sin*. "Reward them that hate me." No power can avert or escape His anger. They may think themselves to be immovably fixed, but "their foot shall slide." They shall totter and fall. Refuge, strength, and hope shall fail them. In God only can these be found. "The Eternal God is thy refuge." Flee to Him.

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 31. *God a rock*.** A contrast between God and idols—in existence, attributes, and conduct.

**Ver. 35. *Sliding feet*.** Risks of carnal security. 1. Men fix themselves firmly, feel secure, and think nothing can shake them. 2. This is tremendous risk. Contempt for misfortune of others first sign of insecurity (Job xii. 5). Sin overbalances, providence shakes the feet, and the fall begins. 3. Results most sad. Imagine a slip into the abyss from alpine heights! "To slide and fall is in a thousand places certain destruction; and no threatenings against the workers of iniquity are more terrible than that they shall be set in slippery places, that their feet shall slide in due time" (*Dr. Thom. Ld. and Bk.*). 4. God alone can prevent sliding. "Hold thou me up," etc. (*cf.* Ps. xxxviii. 17; xciv. 18).

**Vers. 35–36. 1. *A warning against self revenge*.** "Avenge not yourselves,

but rather give place unto (the) wrath (let it spend itself and have free space; or give place, by stepping aside as a man attacked by a wild beast); vengeance is mine (Rom. xii. 19). 2. God has power to punish. "I will repay, saith the Lord." Put off indulgence, make room for the judgment of God, who will execute in due time.

"Anger is like  
A full hot horse; being allow'd his way,  
Self-mettle tires him."—*Shakspeare*.

**Ver. 36. *The Lord shall judge*.** Judicial acts of God. 1. As judge for His people in mercy. 2. As judge *against* or *upon* them to correct. 3. As judge of all men in righteousness.

**Vers. 34, 35. *Iniquity reserved for future punishment*.** 1. *Treasured up*. Noticed, not forgotten, never forgiven without repentance. 2. *Treasured up to be punished*.—"Evil pursueth sinners." An order of sequence in moral as physical law. Punishment

fixed, certain and near. "Avenging deities are shod with wool," but never pause nor mitigate their judgments. 3. *Be wise and escape.* Fatally unwise to delay repentance and return to God!

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,  
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

Vers. 36-38. Learn—1. *Afflictions of God's people.* Their power gone, reduced to shame and helplessness. Gods whom they worshipped and supported despised and unable to defend them. 2. *The pity of God for His afflicted people.* Judge, i.e., plead their cause, protect and deliver them. *Repent* of evils brought against them, and deal in mercy, not in judgment, with them. 3. *Lessons to be learned from this experience.* The folly of forsaking God. The impotence of idols. The insecurity of any hiding place

against the justice of God. The design of mercy to awaken a sense of ingratitude and rebellion. "Experience is the best master." "Experience teaches fools; and he is a fool, indeed, that does not profit by it."

Ver. 39. Learn—1. God's self-existence. "I am He." 2. God's sole rule. "No God with me." 3. God as arbiter of life and death. "I kill and I make alive," etc. 4. God's absolute power. "Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

Vers. 40-42. *A terrible God.* 1. Threatening vengeance. 2. Ratifying sentence with an oath. 3. Preparing to execute. 4. No resistance when vengeance comes! "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies."

### THE LAST DISCOURSE.—Verses 44-47.

These are the last words, the repetition of the law of Moses, the ultimatum to the people.

I. The subject of the discourse. "All the words of this law." Words of warning, promise and command. The law with its claims and authority. Religion represented by law. 1. *Its fulness.* "All the words" needed. Nothing kept back. Testimony clear and sufficient, enough to satisfy intellect and heart, to guide and bless. 2. *Its importance.* "Not a vain thing," an empty, worthless profession; a mere shadow of the good and true, but the highest and only good. The "one thing needful." 3. *Its necessity.* "Your life." Not a philosophy, a mere system of morality, but a power of spiritual life. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." "Christianity is not a theory or a speculation, but a life; not a philosophy of life, but a life and a living process."—(Coleridge). It is the highest life possible to men, an impartation of power by which eternal life may be finally attained.

II. The attention which the discourse requires. Attention and interest should be according to the importance of a thing. 1. *A fixed purpose of mind.* "Set your hearts." Heart and mind must be centered on it. Constant thought and application, a firm and earnest resolve. Through decision, not passing feelings and vacillating purpose. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. cxii. 7). 2. *A due performance in life.* "Observe to do." Hear and practice. Business men say life means energy and work. Idleness and sloth are marks of death. Christ quickens, constrains and becomes the principle of action and obedience. When Christ lives within us, obedience is prompt and loyal. "Keep My commandments and live."

III. The blessings of thus heeding this discourse. If religion is the essence of wisdom possession must be advantageous. 1. *It gives enjoyment of life.* "Your life" in its joy, happiness and usefulness. Life—miserable existence without God. Noble and glorious the life of him who loves God and feels that



God loves him. 2. *It prolongs life.* "Prolong your days." If this promise does not really belong to us, yet religion tends to length of life, in preserving from sins which shorten it, in promoting health, cheerfulness and activity. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." 3. *It prepares for eternal life.* Heaven not only eternal existence but eternal enjoyment. True religion an earnest and foretaste of it. More than dry formalism, cold assent, barren orthodoxy. It is essentially "the fountain of life," "the kingdom of God within."

### THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDS.—*Verses 46-47.*

I. Earnest purpose is essential to personal obedience to God's law. "Set your hearts," etc. Without a purpose no strength in the will, no direction in effort. Power and activity valueless without a clear aim. To fix our hearts on one great end, to make thought and duty define position and relation to this centre principle are chief means of improvement, advance and obedience in life. "My heart, O God, is fixed (prepared, set up) my heart is fixed" (Ps. lvii. 7).

II. Obedience to God's law will secure happiness and prosperity. "It is not a vain thing for you." The life of individuals, the security and elevation of the nation. Obedience better than gigantic schemes of trade, and colonization than enlargement of frontier and increase of armies. "If thou wilt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth."

III. It is our duty to render obedience ourselves and to teach our children. "Ye shall command your children." Instruct by precept and personal example. Affection and divine law should urge to this. This will secure their interests here and welfare hereafter. Not mere talk, teaching to read, but practical training required in present day. "Train up (instruct, dedicate) a child in the way he should go" (Prov. xxii. 6).

### THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES.

I. The last days of Moses were marked by sublime self-forgetfulness, and deep solicitude for the well-being of the people. When informed that the time of his departure was at hand, he exhibits no concern for himself, utters no regret because of his great privation, or anxiety as to future destiny. Sublimely he rises above personal and selfish considerations, and applies mind and heart in a last effort to promote good of the people. Asks Jehovah to appoint a successor in his great office (Num. xxvii. 15-22); solemnly recapitulates the law to the people (Deut. xxxi. 7, 8, 23); pours forth this lofty and solemn song (vers. 1-43); and blesses the several tribes (chap. xxxiii.).

II. The last days of Moses were shadowed and saddened by sin. Why die at this time? Why not permitted to complete his work by leading the people into the promised land? Not because physical strength exhausted or body worn out or diseased (chap. xxxiv. 7). Because he sinned against God (ver. 31, cf. Num. xx. 2-13). Sin imparted mournful interest to last days of Moses.

III. The last days of Moses were relieved and cheered by the mercy of God. God's kindness exhibited in three things. 1. In the aspect in which He represents his death to him. "Die . . . and be gathered unto thy people."

(1.) Death is not the end of our life. "Gathered," etc., not a poetical phrase for death; often used in addition to the record of death as a fact (*cf.* Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33; Num. xx. 26). Nor does the expression relate to burial. In this sense not true of Moses, Aaron, or Abraham (*cf.* Gen. xv. 15; 1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43). "The only assignable sense" says Alford, "is that of reference to a state of further personal existence beyond death." (2.) To the people of God death is the way to congenial social life. Moses about to pass neither into isolation nor uncongenial society of strangers, but to His own people—persons of kindred sympathies, purposes, and interests. 2. In reminding him of the death of Aaron. Moses witnessed the close of Aaron's course on Mount Hor. Recollection of that scene would tend to make his own death less formidable and more familiar. Aaron passed away peacefully; why should Moses dread the same journey? 3. In permitting him to see the promised land (*ver.* 52). Surely this sight, "one of the fairest and widest prospects in all the eastern lands," must have been a source of consolation and joy to the departing spirit of the man of God. Conclusion. 1. See the beauty and nobility of over-looking self in doing good to others; and imitate it. 2. See how one sin may cause grief and loss to a good man; and abstain from every form of evil. 3. See how in God's dealings with men mercy is mingled with judgment, and thankfully trust Him. 4. Our last days will come; by the grace of God let us endeavour so to live, that they be like those of Moses—godly, useful, and inspiring in their prospects.—*William Jones.*

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Vers. 46, 47. True Religion.** 1. Not empty profession. 2. A life conformed to God's will. 3. Real enjoyment. "Religion is the dominion of the soul. It is the hope of life, the anchor of safety, the deliverance from evil" (*Napoleon I.*) *Duty and its Enforcement.* 1. What the duties? Personal religion and instruction of posterity. 2. What are the arguments to enforce it? *a.* Importance of the thing. "Your life." *b.* Advantage of it, &c.

The path of duty is the way to glory.

—*Tennyson.*

**Vers. 49, 50. Moses on Mount Nebo, or a Minister's death scene.** This is the record of a striking death scene. It presents to us—I. The common destiny of our race, "Gathered unto thy people." This phrase denotes the twofold change which death effects in our condition. 1. The corporal; 2. The spiritual. II. The rigorously moral rule. The reason why Moses was required to die now, was because he had committed a sin at Meribah. III. The agency of God in man's dis-

solution. Moses died from the determination of the Divine mind. All existence depends upon God's will. IV. The termination of life in the midst of labour. V. The promptitude of Providence in supplying the place of the dead. This fact is—1. Encouraging to our faith; 2. Humbling to our pride. VI. The tears of a congregation over the grave of their minister. Well might they mourn (*cf.* chap. xxxiv 8, 9).—*Adapted from Dr. Thomas.*

**Ver. 51. Trespassed.** 1. In strange unbelief. 2. In unrestrained passion. 3. In open rebellion. 4. In publicly dishonouring God. Learn the jealousy of God; the possibility of failure in qualities in which we excel. Never think you are secure; guard temper. Though God pardons sin, yet will He mark His hatred even in His servants. A small sin may be followed by great punishment.

Must I then forward only look for death?  
Backward I turn mine eye and find him  
there,  
—*Young.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 2. *Dew and rain.* It is the transformation of death unto life, and the raising of that which lives into higher and fairer form which is the end in view. The morning sun and the morning rain-cloud may seem wide apart in their purpose, may appear at times to obstruct each other, but they have one great aim. The sun and the rain come to the dying seed, and both together draw it from darkness to light and build it up into the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, that God's world may live and praise His name. Both are rich in times of refreshment; the sun after the dark night, the rain after the parched day; and after both, the flower raises its head, and the birds sing, and men are glad.—*J. Ker.*

Ver. 7. *Days of old.*

"The past lives o'er again  
In its effects, and to the guilty spirit  
The ever-frowning present is its image."  
*S. T. Coleridge.*

Ver. 10. *Apple of his eye.* Tender guardianship. This organ more watched than any other. "Does it not appear to thee," says Socrates to Xenophon, "to be a work of providence that, considering the weakness of the eye, He has protected it with eyelids, as with doors which, whenever there is occasion to use it, are opened, and are again closed on sleep? And that it may not receive injury from the winds, He has planted on it eyelashes like a strainer; and over the eyes has disposed the eyebrows, like a penthouse, so that the sweat from the head may do no mischief."

Ver. 15. *Fat.* The great bulk of mankind resemble the swine, which in harvest gather and fatten upon the acorns beneath the oak, but show to the tree which bore them no other thanks than rubbing off its bark, and tearing up the sod around it.—*Scriven.*

Vers. 23-26. *Mischiefs.* Every action becomes more certainly an eternal  
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mother than it is an eternal daughter. *Richter.* Vice ever carries with it the germ of its own ruin, and a retribution which is all the more inevitable from being often slow, awaits every violation of moral law.—*Farrar.*

Ver. 29. *Wise.* If you ask me which is the real hereditary sin of human nature, do you imagine I shall answer—pride or luxury, or ambition, or egotism? No; I shall say—*indolence.* He who conquers *indolence* will conquer almost everything.—*Lavater.*

Vers. 34-35. *In store.* Anne of Austria, Queen of France, once said to Cardinal Richelieu, her implacable enemy—"My Lord Cardinal, there is one fact which you seem entirely to have forgotten; God is a sure paymaster. He may not pay at the end of every week, or month, or year; but I charge you, remember that He pays in the end."

Ver. 39. *I kill.*

Make then, while yet ye may, your God  
your friend.

Vers. 46, 47. *Your life.* Faraday's "religion was a living root. His standard of duty was supernatural. It was not founded on any intuitive ideas of right and wrong, nor was it fashioned upon any outward expediences of time and place; but it was formed entirely on what he held to be the revelation of the will of God in the written word; and throughout all his life his faith led him to act up to the very letter of it."—*Memoir by Dr. Bruce Jones.*

Ver. 46. *Children.* John Eliot, on the day of his death, was found teaching an Indian child the alphabet as he lay on his bed; and when one tried to persuade him to rest, he said—"I cannot preach now, but I have prayed God to keep me useful, and He has left me strength to teach a child."

Ver. 50. *Die.* Life's evening, we may rest assured, will take its character



from the day which has preceded it; and if we would close our career in the comfort of religious hope, we must prepare for it by early and continuous religious habit.—*Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 52. *Not go*. The death of Moses, though it was to him an entrance into glory, was also a chastisement of his infidelity. How many noble proofs had he given of his courage and strength of faith! How many gracious services had he done for his Master? Yet, for one act of disobedience, he must be gathered to his fathers. All our obedience cannot bear out one sin against God. How vainly shall we hope to make amends to God for our former trespasses, by our better behaviour, when Moses hath this one sin laid in his dish, after so many and

worthy testimonies of his fidelity! When we have forgotten our sins, God remembers them; and although not in anger, yet He calls for our arrears. (*Bp. Hall*.) *See the land*. It is the horizon that gives dignity to the foreground; a picture without sky has no glory. This present, unless we see gleaming beyond it the eternal calm of the heavens above the tossing tree-tops with withering leaves, and the smoky chimnies, is a poor thing for our eyes to gaze at, or our hearts to love, or our hands to toil on. But when we see that all paths lead to heaven, and that our eternity is affected by our acts in time, then it is blessed to gaze; it is possible to love the earthly shadows of the uncreated beauty—it is worth while to work.—*Maclaren*.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.—Moses now performs the last great act of life and blesses the tribes of Israel. "The blessing opens with a solemn conclusion of the covenant and giving of the law at Sinai, by which the Lord became King of Israel, to indicate at the outset the source from which all blessings must flow to Israel (vers. 2-5). Then follow the separate blessings upon the different tribes" (vers. 6-25).—(*Keil*). Compare these blessings with those of Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 40-49; i. 27). Nothing special in the order.

1-5. Introduction. Man of God (*cf.* Josh. xiv. 6; 1 Sam. ix. 6; Ps. xc.—(*Heading*)). Ver. 2 describes the vast area over which God's glory shone in giving of law, from Sinai, Seir and Paran—in thunder, fire and heavenly retinue. Saints, *lit.*, from myriads of holiness, *i.e.*, holy angels (Zech. xiv. 5). People, *lit.*, peoples, *i.e.*, the Gentiles or the twelve tribes. Saints, God's people just spoken of or holy ones (ver. 2). Thy hand, change from third to second person, and *vice versa*, common in Hebrew poetry (*cf.* Ps. xlix. 19). Hand, His power. He (ver. 5) God, not Moses (*Jesh. cf.* xxxii. 15).

6. Reuben's blessing. The rights of Reuben withheld in Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix. 3); Moses prays for continuance and prosperity. Simeon is passed over, scattered abroad he lost individually as a tribe, yet lived in the midst of the tribe of Judah and shared its general blessings. Few, *lit.*, a number, easily counted, a negative implied from preceding clause, "let not his men be few," *i.e.*, let them be many.—(*Gesenius*).

7. Judah's blessing. Royal tribe, from whom sceptre must not depart (Gen. xlix. 10). Judah was to lead in war, be brought back in safety and triumph. Sufficient to preserve independence.

8-11. Blessings of Levi. Addressed as petition. Thum, and Urim, *i.e.*, "thy Right and Thy Light," *cf.*, Ex. xxviii. 30). Holy One. Levi as head of tribe. Prove, two events mentioned, one at beginning, the other at end of forty years wandering, represent the series of trials to prove the faith of this chosen tribe. Mas. (Ex. xvii. 1-7). Mar. (Num. xx. 1-13). Said a reference to Ex. xxxii. 26-29; *cf.* Mat. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26. Teach. Ver. 10, dignity of priesthood conferred upon them, and to them belonged office of instructors. Hence favour needed and strength to smite the loins, *i.e.* the seat of power and foil the enemy.

12. Benjamin's blessing. A favourite with his father, was cared for by the Lord. Dwell in safety, resting upon him. Cover, shelter. Shoulders, on his sides or borders, figure from "fathers carrying their sons while young and tender."—(*Calvin*). (*cf.* i. 31). "Upon the back," equivalent to "between shoulders" (1 Sam. xvii. 6).

13-17. Blessing of Joseph (including Ephraim and Manasseh). A resemblance, yet not a reproduction of that pronounced (Gen. xlix. 25, 26). In both fertility of districts allotted to them is a leading feature. Deep (ver. 13) springs of water. Chief things (ver. 15), best gifts Mountains, the sheltered sides of which were covered with vine, olive and fig, etc. Fulness, all good that earth could produce. Good will. Covenant blessings added to natural. Bush, a manifestation of God to Moses (Ex. iii). Separated, consecrated, or distinguished (Gen. xlix. 26). In the strength of this blessing Joseph would be powerful and tread down nations. Glory (ver. 17). Render, "The firstborn of his (*i.e.* Joseph's) bullock is his glory." Reference to Ephraim raised by Jacob to honours of firstborn (Gen. xlviii. 8), and here likened to the firstling of Joseph's oxen, *i.e.*, of Joseph's offspring, the singular noun (*shor*) taken collectively. — (*Speak. Com.*) Ox, an emblem of power generally (Gen. xlix. 6; Ps. xxii. 12; Jer. xlv. 20; Unicorn. Wild bull (*cf.*, Num. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8). Thousands (*cf.* Gen. xlviii. 19). (1 Sam. xviii. 7, 8).

18, 19. Blessings of Zebulun and Issachar. Chiefly a repetition of Gen. xlix. 13-15. Going out in commercial enterprise. Zebulun dwelt on sea shore, Issachar possessed a fertile inland district, dwelt at home and prospered in agricultural pursuits. Mountain, of the Lord's inheritance (Ex. xv. 17), upon which the Lord was about to plant His people and build His sanctuary. They would offer thank offerings themselves and invite to sacrificial meals other nations. — (*Keil.*) Righteousness not merely legal sacrifices conforming to ritual, but those offered in right spirit, well-pleasing to God (Ps. iv. 6; li. 21. — (*Keil.*) Suck. The treasures of both sea (Mediterranean and sea of Galilee) and land shall be theirs; purple dye from the shell of the oyster and mirrors and glass vases from the sand.

20, 21. Blessing of Gad. Enlargeth by extending territory, or delivers from trouble, from attacks by hostile and surrounding tribes. Lion rests securely and fearlessly though surrounded by enemies. The verse indicative of warlike character. First part of conquest of Israel made by Gad and Reuben at request of Moses (*cf.* Num. xxxii.). Portion the leader's portion reserved, *i.e.*, there was reserved the fitting portion for God as leader in war. — (*Speak. Com.*) Heads, *i.e.*, joined other leaders to fulfil God's commands respecting conquest of Canaan (Num. xxxii. 17, 21, 32; Josh. i. 14; iv. 12).

22. Dan's blessing. Whelp, a cub; differing from a young lion weaned and beginning to catch prey for itself. Shall leap after it has grown up. Springs suddenly upon its prey. Bashan abounding with cars. Dan's territory was insufficient; by a sudden and successful irruption northwards he established a colony.

23. Naphtali's blessing. Satisfied, his lot some of the most beautiful scenery and most fertile soil in Palestine (*cf.* Porter's Handbook of Syria). Fruits ripen earlier here than anywhere else.

24, 25. Blessing of Asher. Acceptable, let him be the favoured one of his brethren, *i.e.*, the favoured of God. The blessing an exposition of the name. Asher, the prosperous (*cf.* Gen. xxx. 15). — (*Keil.*) Dip. The process of extracting oil by foot-presses; or allusion to fertile district adapted to culture of olive (Job xxix. 6; *cf.* Gen. xlix. 20). Shoes. This verse continues the figure of preceding, and represents strength and firmness of Asher, as is shod with iron and brass (*cf.* Rev. i. 15). Iron-soled shoes worn by warriors and suitable to rocky country. Days. "Thy strength shall be continued to thee as long as thou shalt live: thou shalt never know feebleness and decay." — (*Speak. Com.*)

26-29. Conclusion. "God's glory and power, and consequent safety and prosperity of God's people, form the climax as they do the basis, of the blessing which the law-giver has to pronounce." None like unto God, O Jeshurun. Rideth with unlimited power in, *i.e.*, as thy helper. This God a refuge (ver. 27), dwelling place for protection to homeless wanderers (Ps. xc. 1; xci. 9; Hab. i. 12). Underneath *i.e.*, God on earth below as well as in heaven above. Fountain, a designation of Israel, who came from Jacob as waters from a fountain (*cf.* Is. xlviii. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 26). Ver. 29, unparalleled protection, deliverance and victory, hence Israel congratulated. Happy! Saved, not mere deliverance from danger and distress, but salvation in general (like Zech. ix. 9; *cf.* Is. xlv. 17), coming from Jehovah.

### THE FORMATION OF THE KINGDOM.—Verses 1-5.

The glory of the covenant, the elevation of Israel as a nation, and the majesty of the King and his law set forth.

I. The revelation of the king. God appears in forms awful and impressive.

1. In *streaming light*. "He shined forth"—like the rising sun, filling all

around, and tipping the mountains with splendour. God is light, illumines every valley, and covers all places with His presence and truth. 2. *In burning fire.* "Went a fiery law." "The Lord descended in fire." "Is not My word like a fire?" (Jer. xxix. 22). 3. *In terrible thunder.* "There were thunders and lightnings." God robes Himself in clouds of smoke or flames of fire to impress the senses and speak to the heart "Whose voice then shook the earth?" 4. *In splendid retinue.* "He came with ten thousands of saints." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even many thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place" (Ps. lxxviii. 17). Thus did God reveal Himself to Israel. "Who is a God like unto Thee?" If mountains trembled, and Moses feared and quaked, how reverent and deeply touched should we be?

II. The number of his subjects. Jehovah is the universal King. His sway is over the meanest and mightiest. All agencies and all creatures are at His service. 1. *Myriads in heaven above.* "Angels, and authorities, and powers" are subject to Him (1 Pet. iii. 22). "Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Dan. vii. 9, 10) as executors of justice or ministers of mercy. 2. *The inhabitants of the earth beneath* (ver. 3). Israel, the Gentiles, and all nations of the earth. "Saints," holy ones especially, stand in His presence, constitute His train, and enter His spiritual kingdom. Submission to Him essential to happiness and heaven.

III. The assumption of Royalty. These splendours of royal state illustrate the majesty of the king, and the method of establishing his kingdom. 1. *By enactment of law.* Law needful, and the medium of blessing in every kingdom. Order and supremacy only secured by good government. "Sovereign law sits empress, crowning good, repressing ill." "The law came by Moses," "was given by the disposition (ministration) of angels" (Acts vii. 53). 2. *By appointment of representatives.* "Moses commanded us a law," was God's viceregent, and a subordinate king. Moses was "the man of God," and the minister of God. Consecration to God's service gives real worth and dignity. True kings and priests those who trust and obey. No supremacy, no reigning without love to God and service to men. This should be our ambition. "I would rather be king over the *French* than king over France," said Louis XIV. 3. *By consent of the people.* Israel stood in attitude of reverence and attention. At His "feet," willing to hear and ready to obey. "All that the Lord shall say we will do." Our wills must be subdued and consent before we become subjects, disciples of Jesus. In vain do we profess or teach, if disobedient. "He that is of God heareth God's words."

### THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S LAW.

The giving of the law was the design of this manifestation. "Moses personates the listening nation, and not only speaks of himself in the third person, but does so by identifying his own person with the nation, because he wished the people to repeat his words from thorough conviction, and because the law which he gave in the name of the Lord was given to himself as well, and was as binding upon him as upon every other member of the congregation" (*Keil*).

I. In the source from which it was revealed. "From his right hand," &c. The law from God; a revelation of his mind and authority. Hence not mere counsel or advice, but given from a source which he cannot question; imposing obligations which are strongest, and enforced by sanctions which none can resist.



II. In the splendour in which it was revealed. This event, unparalleled in the history of man, no nation, whatever its legends or traditions, ever conceived of the God of heaven proclaiming law to them "out of the midst of fire"—light unapproachable hiding his person from the gaze of man. These outward signs of majesty, power and authority will not be witnessed again until the great day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with the angels of His power in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. In the design for which it was revealed. Law designed to reveal the claims and preserve the knowledge of God among men; to convince of sin, offences against the order of society and the authority of the Creator; to enforce moral principles and educate to moral duty. Hence—1. *To enrich God's people.* "The inheritance of the congregation" (ver. 4). Good laws peculiar to Israel, and distinguished them from other nations (Ps. xiv. 7, 20; Rom. iii. 2), are the best wealth and treasure; the Scriptures and the means of grace a goodly heritage to any people. 2. *To bless all nations.* "This is the blessing" (ver. 1)—(a) In revealing God's love. "He loved the people" (ver. 3). (b) In transmitting God's will. Be thankful for this inheritance of law. Remember, obligation to keep it is hereditary, passing from parents to children. Receive it as a legacy of love and truth. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever" (Ps. cxix. 111).

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 1. *The man of God.* 1. A special friend of God. "Speaking face to face, enjoying direct intercourse with God." 2. A distinguished servant, holding high position and engaged in glorious work. 3. A famous legislator, giving divine laws and requiring implicit obedience. 4. A medium of blessing to his people in life, example, and teaching.

Ver. 2. *A fiery law.* 1. In its bright origin. 2. In its searching nature. 3. In its purifying effects. 4. In its awful sanctions. *He shined forth.* God resting and journeying with his people as light, shield, and defence. *Sinai, Seir, and Patan.* Special providences in special places. Manifestation of God's presence, the gift of flesh, appointment of 70 elders and bestowment of Holy Spirit.

Ver. 3. 1. God's love to his people. 2. God's rule over his people. 3. God adored by his people. *In thy hand.* 1. To be formed into a people. 2. To be preserved as a people (John x. 2, 8). 3. To be ruled as a people. *At thy feet.* 1. The place of humility. 2. The

place of security. 3. The place of instruction, sitting like scholars to receive instruction and ready to obey. "Every one shall receive of thy words." *Yea, he loved the people.* No doubt of this with regard to Israel. Often reminded of it, and told *why* he set his love upon them. Not for greatness, they were the fewest of all; not for goodness, for they were stiff-necked; but because the Lord had a favour towards them. He chose, redeemed them, provided for them, and distinguished them by miracles and privileges. His love is of three kinds—A love of *benevolence*, which consists in wishing and designing them good. A love of *beneficence*, consisting in doing them good. This appears in a thousand instances, chiefly remembering them in their low estate, and sending his Son that they might live. A love of *complacency*. The love of benevolence and of beneficence regarded them as unworthy and miserable; the love of complacency regards them as mere creatures. He cannot take pleasure in those destitute of his image and enemies by wicked works. But he prepares them for delighting in

them and holding intercourse with them. What can I wish more? Do men reproach? I have been precious in his sight, honourable, and he has loved me. Let them curse, he will bless. One smile of God's is better

than life, and will more than balance a universe of frowns. Let my portion and the portion of mine be—"The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush."—*Jay*.

REUBEN, OR THE BLESSING OF EXISTENCE.—*Verse 6.*

This is a prayer for the continued existence of Reuben and suggests things that imperilled this existence.

I. Existence prolonged in danger. Reuben was endangered by surrounding nations—their leaders were far in advance of them, and little ones left behind (Num. xxxii. 27; Jos. iv. 12). Individual and family life dependent upon God, exposed to risks. Need to pray for each as Abraham, "O that Ishmael might live before thee."

II. Existence prolonged in sin. Reuben had a threefold honour (Gen. xlix. 3), as first-born, might of Jacob's strength and naturally pre-eminent. He forfeited these blessings and fell into dishonour. He grievously transgressed (Gen. xlix. 3, 4) and rebelled with Korah (Num. xvi. 1). Sin brings disgrace, shortens life and exposes to judgment. "Preserve thou those that are appointed to die."

III. Existence prolonged with prosperity. "Let not his men be few." Judging from the first census after deliverance from Egypt and that on plains of Moab nearly forty years after, this tribe was reduced in number. The prayer includes continued existence, increase of number and perpetual remembrance. "The Lord shall increase you more and more." "I will increase them with men like a flock." Lessons from Reuben's history. Learn: 1. Not to insult the fallen and disgraced. 2. Not to perpetuate marks of wickedness. "To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it." 3. To take warning. Occupied with herds and flocks they lost early energy; could not be roused against Jabin (Judges v. 15, 16); dissipated strength in distant expeditions (*cf.* 1 Chron. v. 10-18), and did not care to complete their conquests (*cf.* Num xxxii.)—(*cf. Speak. Com.*) 4. Pray for personal life, family increase and church prosperity, that all may be given to God.

JUDAH: THE BLESSING OF SUPREMACY.—*Verse 7.*

This reference is rich, peculiar, and suggestive. Judah, the royal tribe; the prayer for its settlement, security, and supremacy.

I. Supremacy through conflict. Judah, prominent in battle, in order of marching and encampment, hence danger, conflict, and suffering. All knowledge and virtue gained through difficulty and contest. The earth is subdued and sovereignty over men acquired by warfare. Supremacy ever through conflict.

II. Supremacy by God's help in conflict. "Be thou an help to him." God strengthened his hands, gave warriors sufficient to support the tribe and vindicate its rights. Without him no strength, no triumph. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."

III. This help in conflict secured by prayer. "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah." Conscious of weakness, he *cried* to God. Prayer never out of place.

Greatest soldiers often devoutest men—Cromwell, Havelock, and Hedley Vicars. A prayerful posterity and people ever eminent and supreme. But prayer and work, self-help and reliance upon God must go together (*cf.* 2 Chron. xiii. xiv., xv.). Labour and pray, then in husbandry, art, and war we prevail. "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler" (1 Chron. v. 2).

### LEVI: THE REWARDS OF SERVICE.—*Verses 8-11.*

**I. Service in defence of Right.** After the defection at Sinai the sons of Levi, not in mere heat of pious zeal, but at the command of Moses and under divine direction, obeyed readily, attacked courageously, and slew idolators. They defended God's honour, supported God's cause, and punished God's enemies. "Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said who is on the Lord's side? And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him, &c.," Ex. xxxii. 26-28.

**II. Service rendered in a noble spirit.** The value of service estimated by the difficulties and the spirit in which it is given—lovingly or reluctantly. 1. *In a spirit of faithfulness.* They alone were true; all the rest broke the covenant. Holy amidst idolators; upright when multitudes bowed like reeds before the wind. "Among the faithless, faithful only he." 2. *In a spirit of impartiality.* Best friends and nearest relatives were not spared. Zeal for God prevailed over love for father and mother. This is the spirit of the Master. (Mt xii. 48.) 3. *In a spirit of self-denial.* Levites often absent from home, engaged in constant attendance at the altar, and could not defend their families as other Israelites. They preferred fulfilment of duty to indulgence in grief at the loss of kindred, (Lev. xxi., 11, 12.), and obedience to God to natural affection.

**III. Service severely tested in its performance.** Their history had been critical and sad. 1. *Tested by the people.* "Moses and Aaron, in whom the whole tribe was proved, had grievously failed. "Massah" and "Meribah" represent the feelings of the people, and the purpose of God to try their leaders. The whole journey was a probation and a test. 2. *Tested by the enemy.* They met with hatred and opposition, "them that rise against him, and of them that hate him." Those who teach and reprove others, who uphold and preserve religion, meet with enemies. Korah and his company were envious, (Num xvi. 1); Saul rose up against the priests (1 Sam. xxii. 18) and were overcome.

**IV. Service abundantly rewarded in its results.** Levi was the holy one, the consecrated to God. He was rewarded. 1. *With official honour.* "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." They were to retain the priesthood and be endued with knowledge and uprightness to discharge its duties. These were lost in the captivity and not restored to the second temple, but are perpetuated for ever in Him of whom Aaron was a type. 2. *With personal acceptance.* "Accept the work of his hands, ver. 11. Holy administrations done by hands and body hence fitly described. God accepted them with favour. Acceptance with God the greatest blessing to minister or people, and worthy of aim. "That we may be accepted of him," 2 Cor. v. 9. 3. *With continual prosperity.* "Bless Lord his substance," special allotments and ample provision came easily. Increased fertility of land brought increased substance. Thus the blessing of God was upon their work, and the providence of God was their inheritance. Those who depend most upon God's blessing work most faithfully in God's service, shall never be disappointed. "A sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God."



THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD.—*Verses 8, 10.*

Levi represents the head of the tribe whose crowning glory was the priesthood and possession of Thummim and Urim.

**I. Its divine allotment.** Every man a calling in which to abide, a vocation from heaven. The Christian ministry the highest and noblest, not the gift of Bishops, Presbytery or Council, but an appointment of God. "None but He who made the world can make a minister of the Gospel" says *Newton*. "The sons of Levi receive the office of the priesthood" (Heb. vii. 5.)

**II. Its necessary qualifications.** "Thy holy one" *Holy*, pure in life and character, consecrated in work, incorrupt in doctrine and consistent in all things. *Intelligent* "able to teach others," judgment to Jacob and law to Israel (ver. 10). *Truthful*, "The law of truth must be in his mouth." The true minister will resolve like the missionary Eliot to leave something of God, heaven and religion in all that he does.

**III. Its sacred duties set forth in three functions.** 1. *To teach.* "They shall teach Jacob, &c." Knowledge must be sought, possessed and communicated "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Exek. xlv. 23) "The law shall not perish for the priest, nor counsel for the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jer. xviii. 18.) 2. *To offer incense.* "They shall put incense before thee." To offer prayers for the people, present gifts, gratitude, and praise. "He shall burn incense upon it (the golden altar) a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (Exek. xxx. 7, 8.) 3. *To present sacrifices.* "Whole burnt sacrifices upon thine altar." God approached by sacrifice, for men have sinned and need mercy—Christians generally "a royal priesthood" to offer up spiritual sacrifices (i. Peter ii. 5-9.)

**IV. Its distinguished success** (ver. 2.) Those who rightly serve God and instruct men will reap reward. 1. *Their work is accepted.* "Accept the work of his hands." 2. *Their character is vindicated.* Men may ridicule enthusiasm, suspect motives, and assail character. But God defends them, vindicates their conduct and society, and smites their enemies so "that they rise not again."

BENJAMIN—BELOVED AND SECURED.—*Verse 12.*

Benjamin beloved by Jacob his father (Gen. xlix. 27). In this parental love Moses sees a reflection of God's love so free and tender.

**I. By an endeared relationship.** "The beloved of the Lord." This name not an empty title, nor a description of human merit, but an expression of God's regard for holy character, genuine service and devout attachment to his cause. If we cannot be rich, we may be useful. If we do not receive honours from men, we may be dignified with the title "Sons of God."

**II. By distinguished privileges.** God's presence would overshadow, protect, and exalt them by position and influence in central government and religious worship. 1. *By special advantages.* His inheritance included Moriah, the mount on which the temple of God was built. Future generations dwelt near the oracle of God and had easy access to the ordinances of public worship. In Israel's eventful history this tribe shone with conspicuous honour. It gave birth to the first King and was the pride of the greatest apostle (cf. Rom. ii. 1; Phil. iii. 5). 2. *By divine protection.* "Shall dwell in safety by him." If the

words apply to the temple, then even Benjamin "was covered all the day long" under the security of the sanctuary (Ps. cxxv. 2) often described as a place of refuge (Ps. xxvii. 4, 5; Neh. vi. 10). God's singular comforts and constant safeguards ever towards those he loves. The welfare of his children is always the care of his heart. In weakness and danger "they dwell between his shoulders."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 6. *Live.*** Learn—1. *Sin endangers life and its blessings.* Reuben's impoverished life and diminished numbers through ancestral sins (*cf.* Gen. xxxv. 22; xlix. 4). 2. *God in answer to prayer preserves forfeited blessings.* "Not die." Though deprived of the honour and privileges of firstborn, yet he retained rank, became more numerous than many other tribes (Num. i. 21; ii. 11), yet gradually sank into a nomadic tribe which had enough merely to "live and not die."

**Ver. 7. *Voice.*** Putting thy promises (Gen. viii. 9–11) into suit by his prayers, and pressing thee for a performance (*Trapp*). Three things were expressed—1. That the tribe of Judah, conscious of weakness, shall depend upon the Most High, and make supplication to him. 2. That God will hear such prayer. 3. That his hands shall be increased, and that he shall prevail over his enemies. This blessing has striking affinity with that which this tribe received from Jacob (Gen. xlix. 9), and both may refer to our blessed Lord, who sprang from it, who conquered our deadly foes by his death, and whose *praying* posterity ever prevail through his might (*A. Clarke*). In the verse we have a prayer—1. *For unity.* Bring him unto his people; let them be united and permanent. 2. *For strength.* "Let his hands be sufficient." No work of any kind without strong hands. "The arms of his hands were made strong by the

hands of the mighty God of Jacob. 3. *For success.* "Be thou a help to him from his enemies." Pray and obey, for "good success have they that do his commandments" (Ps. cxi. 10).

**Vers. 8, 10. *The blessing of the Christian ministry.*** 1. As a medium of God's will. 2. As teachers of God's law. 3. As intercessors for God's people.

**Ver. 12. *Beloved.*** God's special love. 1. *Tender*—like a father carrying his child between his shoulders. 2. *Sufficient*—"cover him." 3. *Lasting*—"all the day long." *The safety of the beloved of the Lord.* Of Benjamin three things are here said which will beautifully apply to all God's people—I. He was the special object of the Divine affection, "beloved of the Lord." God especially loves his spiritual children with a love of—1. Approbation. 2. Manifestation; "He gives them love tokens and pays them love visits. 3. Distinction. II. He was to dwell near to the Lord, "by Him." All God's people are near to Him—1. By grace. 2. In providence. 3. In reference to His ordinances. 4. With regard to the prevailing impressions of the mind. III. He was to abide in perfect security. God's chosen dwell in safety from (1) the curses of the Divine law; (2) the powers of darkness; (3) the perils of life; 4. the terrors of death and the judgment day.—*Dr. Burns.*

#### JOSEPH; OR PLENTY AND POWER.—*Verses 13–17.*

Moses waxes eloquent and poetical at the mention of Joseph. Out of the fulness of his heart his mouth speaks. "He desires for this tribe the greatest possible abundance of earthly blessing and a vigorous manifestation of power in conflict with the nations."—(*Keil*).

**I. Exuberant fertility bestowed.** No scarcity in any department. A fertile country, a prolific seed and a balmy clime. 1. *Precious fruits of earth.* "The precious things of the earth" (ver. 16). Its trees and pasturage, and the cattle that feed upon it; for all of which Joseph's land was famous. 2. *The genial influences of heaven.* "The precious things of heaven." Its dew, sunshine and showers. "God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. xxvii. 28). 3. *Fruits in due season.* Fruits matured by light and warmth, from sun and moon. Once in a year by the sun, annual productions as corn, barley and grapes. Monthly productions, as grass and herbs, figs and olives, of which many crops in a year by the moons. 4. *Varied productions of land.* "The ancient mountains," yielded their "chief things," and "the lasting hills" their useful ores. "The deep couched beneath" in perennial fountains and flowing streams. "Blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, etc." (Gen. xlix. 25).

**II. Regal authority established.** "His horns are like the horns of unicorns," emblems of strength and royal authority. 1. *Established by aggressive power.* "With them he shall push the people together." Drive out Canaanites and overcome all opposition "to the ends of the earth." The most distant nations. 2. *Established in great security.* The stately bullock an emblem of quiet, patient strength. Its horns natural weapons of defence and security. 3. *Established in prolific numbers.* "The ten thousands of Ephraim," but "the thousands of Manasseh." "Truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. xlix. 19; cf. Num. i. 33-35). 4. *Established in signal honour.* Joseph "was illustrious among his brethren," separated in the sense of consecrated or distinguished. A dignity received for his affectionate conduct to his father. We may gain this honour and emulate Joseph in temper, taste and purpose.

**III. Spiritual blessings added.** "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush." To the blessings of heaven and earth spiritual mercies are desired. What is life, wealth, and earthly blessings without divine favour? God's presence better than large estates, splendid revenues, military glory, and pushing energy. "The good will" is more desirable than natural productions. God is more than His gifts. "With thee is the fountain of life."

But oh, Thou bounteous giver of all good,  
Thou art of all thy gifts Thyself the crown!  
Give what thou canst—without Thee we are poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.  
—Cowper.

**ZEBULUN; OR, BUSINESS PURSUITS AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.—Verses 18, 19.**

Commercial pursuits and sacrificial offerings are here connected. "Life is described in its two aspects of work and production, rest and recreation." "Going out" (enterprise and labour) is attributed to Zebulun, and "remaining in tents" (the comfortable enjoyment of life) to Issachar. In accordance with the delineation of their respective characters in the blessing of Jacob, this is to be attributed to the poetical parallism of the clauses, and the whole is to be understood as applying to both in the sense suggested by Graf, "Rejoice, Zebulun and Issachar, in your labour and your rest" (*Keil*). Learn—

**I. The providence of God in the spheres of men.** As the tribes of Israel were located in Canaan, so now men's "fortunes" are at God's disposal. "What is chance to man is the appointment of God," says one. The lot "in the lap" at the bottom of an urn determined important matters. Work was appointed,



dwellings fixed, and officers chosen. "The lot cast" at, peradventure, carrying a show of casualty (*Bp. Hall*) is under a *certain* disposal; "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33). 1. *In trade*, with its special tastes, skill, and success. 2. *In residence*, with its surroundings and comforts. Each man's sphere of life, and each nation's place on earth, are adapted to character under the originating cause and controlling power of God, "who hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts xvii. 26).

II. The joy springing from a right discharge of duty in these spheres. "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, etc." If we do our duty in that station of life in which it hath pleased God to call us, we may be happy. God's blessing can rest on commerce and agriculture. Prosperity without this may be a misery, and not a joy. Secular pursuits should develop a spirit of gladness. Profits in trade, comforts of home, and the callings of life are means of pleasure and the gifts of God. "Every man also, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God" (Ecc. v. 19).

III. The expression of this joy in religious worship. "They shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." Ties of affinity bound these two tribes together. The same feeling, purpose, and zeal ruled in both, and displayed in the worship of God. God was acknowledged in business pursuits, and success prompted to consecration, and afforded gifts of corn, fruit, and oil to God. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, etc." (Prov. iii. 9, 10). 1. *They worshipped God themselves*. Business no excuse for neglect and staying at home. To others they set an example in liberality, praise, and energy. Their sacrifices were well-pleasing to God. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." 2. *They invited others to join them*. "They shall call the people unto the mountain." Alive themselves, they stirred up others (Zech. viii. 21). Their zeal was contagious. Their neighbours at home ("in thy tents") were not forgotten; their merchants abroad ("going out") were missionaries of God. A spirit of earnestness and personal resolve will incite others, and meet with a ready response. "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go *speedily* (go, going, implying earnestness and constancy) to pray before (entreat the face of) the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also" (Zech. viii. 21).

#### ZEBULUN AND ISSACHAR.

I. The dependence of one class of society upon another. In warfare some pray upon the mount, while others fight in the valley; in commerce some "go out" and others stay at home. Society in its various parts, pursuits, and interests is a school of mutual help. Persons most prominent and obscure, most easy and most enterprising, trades most attractive or most humble, depend upon each other. "The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil" (Is. xli. 7).

II. The blessings of unity in benevolent enterprises. Numbers accomplish what individuals cannot. Men combine to increase resources and surmount obstacles. In the development of trade and in the propagation of truth "unity is strength." 1. *It guarantees success*. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas." Treasures of sea and land shall be theirs. The soldier falters alone, but with comrades he advances with confidence to victory. "Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labour" (Ecc. iv. 9).

2. *It creates joy.* "Rejoice" not only in success but in co-operation to secure it. Richer is the enjoyment of the common good when mutual efforts promote it. "That both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice."

III. The honour gained by those who rightly co-operate in benevolent enterprises. "They shall call the people unto the mountain." God will fix his seat on the mount in their midst; they shall invite others to worship, be honoured as missionaries to neighbours and distant nations. God will hold fellowship with them, and many shall participate in their joy and sacrificial meals; honoured in privileges, calling, and social intercourse. "Them that honour me I will honour."

# OUTGOING AND HOME-KEEPING: A SERMON FOR SUMMER.—*Verses 18, 19.*

Issachar the fifth, and Zebulun the sixth son of Jacob and Leah. When born their mother selected their names, and gave thanks to God. In one case "God hath given me my hire; and she called his name Issachar. In the other, "God hath endued me with a good dowry; and she called his name Zebulun." These words describe the different spheres and the common duties of Zebulun and Issachar, and suggest ideas respecting ourselves suited to the season of summer.

*Zebulun.* An itinerating tribe. Their distinct habit and relative position was *going out*. Their territory to Mediterranean, with its ports as "a haven for ships." They are commemorated as first who adventured skiffs on ocean, and who acquired skill in fishing. They engaged in foreign commerce and defensive war, became mariners and merchants, deriving wealth from productions of other countries and from beings "which suck the abundance of the seas" and enriched "with treasures hid in the sand," perhaps gems, corals, and pearls from bottom of sea by diving. *Issachar.* A district entirely inland, and purely agricultural. Its soil so rich that most indolent invited to cultivate it. Its valleys covered with corn, hills rejoiced on every side, and vast plains ornamented and enriched with trees. A home-keeping tribe; like Jacob a plain man dwelling in tents, occupied with breeding cattle. Their toil rewarded them with sufficient supply for personal wants and public revenue. Loth to leave they "acquitted themselves better in the subsidy than in the muster-roll." Others went out to battle; they "abode among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks."

These different spheres and occupations find parallel in modern England, with its diversities and divisions, its population of various orders and classes. Many go out; business calls them abroad. They traverse the kingdom for purposes of commerce, and circumnavigate the globe in the interests of science. Ships incessantly sail in all seas. Exports and imports enormous. Others go out in quest of health; jaded workers needing relaxation, students in search of knowledge, adventurous men, or teeming thousands in cheap excursions. Still there are stayers at home—devotees of the dwelling—domestic hermits—so tenacious of tent that they never go anywhere. More fond of retirement than roaming, who believe that "as the bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." In choice of these different conditions and varied pursuits he sees traces of human will and Divine appointment. Inclination for each kind of life may be God's work. He predisposes some for the quietude of the hamlet and monotonous labour of the homestead; fits others for the city full of stir, for the port crowded with strangers, and for travel with its everchanging events.

Zebulun and Issachar, who occupied different spheres, *were directed to perform common duties.* Both to rejoice, call people to the mountain, and to offer sacrifices of righteousness. Zebulun to be contented and cheerful in

going out, not to repine at exposure to danger and fatigue; but bravely encounter perils of sea, and patiently endure the bustle of port. Not permitted to envy brethren passing their lives in safety and inland position. The other tribe equal reason to rejoice and be cheerful, for their tents fixed in most fertile parts of fruitful land. Every country has its attractions to those within its boundaries. Denizens may find delight where travellers see no beauty. There is mercy in every place, and if we have an eye to see it and a heart to rejoice in it, no place will be underrated or dispraised. If not good enough, strive to make it better. Poor it may be, and we shall prove our unworthiness by leaving it worse than we found it.

Wherever we live, in town or country, near lively coasts or far inland, we should be mindful of our religious duties and acts. These duties prescribed to Zebulun and Issachar, "call the people to the mountain," the centre of general assembly and seat of religious worship. The duty of convoking people the official act of Levites, but a mutual service among people themselves. Those in retired regions must call each other out of tents, those who travelled and traded must commend worship of God to those whom they met and with whom they did business. In our day the mountain is near us. Sanctuaries open to all classes. Those who go out find them in places of sojourn; those who stay in see them within reach from their dwellings. With mountain always accessible at home and abroad, our duty to call each other to it. We shall thus diversify homekeeping, sanctify outgoing by public exercise of religion—what these exercises are, learned from the text, "*the sacrifices of righteousness.*" Sacrifices of many kinds varying from the great propitiatory offering of Jesus once for all, to humblest presentation of joy and praise by the people he has redeemed. We are "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, &c." Our prayers and songs, preaching and teaching, gifts for God's treasury, good deeds in general and communications for special need may all become sacrifices of righteousness well pleasing to God. The work of the Lord should always be done and worship maintained. He must have an altar in our tents and an offering in our tour. Before every outgoing His presence should be asked and in return to the delights of home we should repair to the sanctuary of God. This prophecy of Moses may have suggested by same Holy Spirit the double duty enjoined by David. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."—*Rev. W. Underwood, D.D.*

#### GAD; LEADERSHIP, AND VALOUR.—*Verses 20–21.*

"In the blessing of Noah (Gen. ix. 26), the God of Shem is praised, so Moses praises the Lord who enlarged Gad, *i.e.*, who not only gave him broad territory in the conquered kingdom of Sihon, but furnished generally unlimited space for his development (*cf.* Gen. xxvi. 22), that he might unfold his lion-like nature in conflict with foes" (*Keil*).

**I. Wonderful enlargement of Territory.** "Enlargeth Gad." Extends the borders of his territories by Jephtha (Judg. xi. 33) and by the victories over the Hagarenes (1 Chron. v. 18–21), or delivers out of distress, which is called enlarging. Spiritually God enlarges individuals. "Thou hast enlarged (relieved me) in my distress" (Ps. iv., *cf.* Ps. xxxi. 8). He enlarges the Christian church. "The Lord hath made room (*lit.* broad space) for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. xxvi. 22).

**II. Strength in self defence.** When territories were gained they could be kept and defended. "He dwelt as a lion," couched and rested, fearless and secure; was annoyed by surrounding tribes (Jud. xi.), but overcame them. No force could prevail against them; they shattered "the arm," the instrument of strength, and destroyed "the head," the policy, and rule of every foe.



**III. Valour in Leadership.** When they had chosen their own lot, they helped to secure that of others. They were distinguished not for ease and selfishness, but for valour, promptitude, and energy. 1. *They fought in obedience to God's commands.* "He executed the justice of the Lord." Executed the decree to extirpate inhabitants of Canaan (*cf.* Num. xxxii.) 2. *They fought in the front ranks.* "Came with the heads of the people," the chiefs of other tribes, were leaders in the war. Many skulk behind in fear and reluctance. Be prominent and courageous in the good fight of faith. 3. *They fought bravely.* They fulfilled their promise to Moses. "We ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place" (Num. xxxii. 16-17). Be helpful to others and valiant through God for right. Courage is required in every war. This crowned the efforts of Joshua with success (1, 5, 8) and raised Hezekiah to unequalled eminence among the kings of Judah (2 Kings xviii. 5-7). "Be strong and of good courage."

## HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 16. Separated.** 1. By the treatment he received from them. 2. By the providence of God which exalted and distinguished him. *Joseph, a type of Christ*, separated in personal character, in evil treatment and divine exaltation. *Good will of him that dwelt in the bush.* 1. *The Dweller in the Bush.* Not an angel, but God himself (Ex. iii. 2). Hence God's favour desired better than man's favour, fickle, uncertain, and worthless. 2. *The good will of the dweller in the bush.* Israel's condition sad, helpless and hopeless. God appears. 1. To confirm his promise. 2. To accomplish deliverance. 3. To pledge his presence. Or, 1. *A pleasing retrospect.* Moses never forgot the bush, deeply impressed and marvellously strengthened by its appearance. Past experience should teach and help. 2. *A wonderful revelation.* "Good will." Love, condescension and power to redeem. A revelation of God suited to Moses and to Israel. "A great sight." 3. *A solemn pledge.* God had not forsaken his people nor forgotten his promise. "He heard their groaning, remembered his covenant, looked upon Israel (with watchfulness and sympathetic feeling), and had respect unto them" (Ex. ii. 24-25.) "The burning bush, the persecuted church, was not consumed, because the good will of God, of which David speaks (Ps. cvi. 4), was in the bush. So it is still with His in the fiery trial, in any affliction" (Is. xliii. 1)—*Trapp.*

**Ver. 17. Glory.** A bullock was the most excellent of animals among

the Jews, not only because of its *acceptableness* to God in *sacrifice*, but because of its great *usefulness* in agriculture. There is something peculiarly noble and dignified about the ox, and his greatest ornament are his fine *horns*. These the inspired penman has in view, as the following clause proves, and it is well known that in scripture language, *horns* are the emblems of *strength, glory, and sovereignty* (Ps. lxxv., 5, 11, lxxxix., 18, 25, cxii., 9; Dan. viii. 3; Luke i. 69; Rev. xvii. 3.—*Clarke.*

*Push.* Pushing in life. In God's strength and by God's opening. No push without strength, and no opening without God. "Through Thee will we *push down* our enemies" (Ps. 44, 5.)

**Ver. 18. In thy tents.** Issachar, a powerful, sagacious tribe capable of great exertion and warlike achievements, in danger of luxuriant repose and subjection to more heroic men, because given to quiet pursuits and fat meadows. We must conquer and serve. "Be a hero in the strife." "Put on the dauntless spirit of resolution."

**Ver. 21. With the Heads.** 1. God's cause *in its nature.* Holy and more sacred than the rescue of Jerusalem from infidel Turks by Crusaders. 2. God's cause *in its requirements.* (1.) Courageous leaders. (2.) United ranks. 3. God's cause *in its rewards.* (1.) It secures the "first portion," a choice purchased by bravery. (2.) It gains the commendation and prayers of good men. "Blessed be he, &c."

## DAN ; ACTIVITY IN CONFLICT.—Verse 22.

Jacob had compared him to a serpent for subtlety, that suddenly darts at the horses' heels and throws the rider. Moses gives prominence to strength and activity. We have : 1. *The agility of youth*. "He shall leap." Springing and leaping, signs of agility. "Spring like a lion on his prey and spread consternation around him." 2. *Strength in attack*. "Dan is a lion's whelp." The tribe remarkable for strength and prowess, courage and resolution—Samson from this tribe. Strength rightly used a blessing. "The more we attack sin and act for God, the more we are enabled to do." "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." 3. *Swiftness in action*. "He shall leap." Promptitude in decision, boldness in action most needful. Leaders in war are nimble and adventurous. Joshua exercised stratagem and courage, was prompt in action and obedient to God. "O God be thou strong in our weakness that we may be ever steady in thy strength." *Bp. Hall*.

## NAPHTALI ; SATISFACTION IN DIVINE BLESSING.—Verse 23.

1. *Satisfied in acquisition of suitable territory*. "The possession of the sea and the south, *i.e.*, an inheritance which should combine the advantages of the sea—a healthy sea breeze—with the grateful warmth of the south." *Keil*. Possess thou the west and the south. 2. *Satisfied in possession of God's favour*. If the *favour of men*; this in return for courteous and obliging conduct; as the graceful hind, zealous for liberty and kind words (Gen. xlix. 21). "Kind words never die." As a man sows will he reap. If *God's favour*, this the sublimest of all possessions. It is *sufficient*, "full with the blessing." It gives *contentment*. "Satisfied with favour." With this we have enough, and desire no more. This satisfies heart, conscience and intellect. God's blessing satisfies all human instincts. All misery and delusion without him. Delighting in him, all things minister to our comfort. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"My soul which flies to thee, her trust, her treasure,  
As misers to their gold, while others rest.—*Young*."

## ASHER : FULNESS OF BLESSINGS.—Verses 24, 25.

"*Asher*, the prosperous (*cf.* Gen. xxx. 15), was justly to bear the name. He was to be a child of prosperity, blessed with earthly good; he was to enjoy rest all his life long in strong fortresses. It is evident enough that this blessing is simply an exposition of the name *Asher*, and that Moses here promises the tribe a verification of the *omen* contained in its name."—(*Keil*).

I. *Numerous offspring*. "Blessed with children," blessed among, or more than the rest of the sons. He shall have numerous, strong and healthy children. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

II. *Social prominence*. "Acceptable to his brethren." Not merely beloved among his brethren, but the one specially favoured and elevated by the Lord. Asher above tribal suspicion and animosity. His influence supreme and respected.

III. *Abundant prosperity*. "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oil for the face and oil for the feet; abundant and most famous. Like Job, he "washed his steps with butter (cream or thick milk), and the rock poured out rivers of oil (alongside of me wherever I went, like the refreshing stream which followed

Israel in the desert) (Job xxix. 6). God provided necessities and dainties. This rich tribe had plenty in its borders and exported to other places. "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat and he shall yield royal dainties" (Gen. xlix. 20).

**IV. Security in the enjoyment of this prosperity.** "Thy shoes iron and brass." The reference not to the feet, nor to mining, but a poetic figure for impregnable strength and defence. Their strength shall be as iron and their fortresses as brass; closed and well defended. "The mountains (barriers) were mountains of brass" (Zech. vi. 1).

**V. Strength in proportion to need.** "As thy days" last so shall thy strength continue. Thou shalt never diminish in number, nor decay in vigour. Thy youth shall be renewed and flourish in old age. As a tribe they should not meet with disaster, but grow stronger and stronger. It may be applied to rest. Constantly exposed to irruptions and pillage, God would give confidence and security. As "thy days," circumstances, vicissitudes and efforts, "so shall thy rest be." When faithful to God no evil can touch, no enemy overcome us. "God is my defence, I shall not be greatly moved."

#### STRENGTH EQUAL TO THE DAY.—Verse 25.

Many great temporal blessings promised to Asher, none like this which is superior to all others. *Strength for the day.*

**I. Natural strength as duration of the days.** Some laid by in life through infirmities and accidents, but others vigorous and strong to the last. "The back is made to meet the burden." The eye of Moses was not dim, nor his natural force abated (chap. xxxiv. 7). Caleb at four-score and five was as strong and ready for war as in the day Moses sent him to view the land (Josh. xiv. 10, 11). "Fat and flourishing in old age to show that the Lord is upright."

**II. Varied strength as the character of the days.** Days vary in complexion. Days of light and darkness, of duty and warfare. Present days, the age in which we live, with its philanthropies, enterprises and missionary ardour. Future days, whatever they may be or bring. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

**III. Spiritual strength as long as days and duties last.** The strength of the sufferer to bear "the ills of life" in patience and submission to God; of the speaker to restrain and to put forth his energy; of the soldier for aggressive and courageous warfare, for complete and constant victory. We need strength to sit still in this restless and feverish day; strength to obey when commanded to act. Strength as the condition of rest and the success of work. "All your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Let me but hear my Saviour say,  
Strength shall be equal to thy day;  
Then I rejoice in deep distress,  
Leaning on all sufficient grace.

#### STRENGTH ACCORDING TO THE DAYS.—Verse 25.

**I.** It is not the design of these words to suppress forelooking and foreplanning in secular things. **II.** Nor are they designed to teach men that God will maintain a providence of miracles on their behalf. **III.** They teach us that we cannot know beforehand what help will spring up from our circumstances. **IV.** They also teach us that anxiety for the future is labour lost. Apply the



subject to those who—(1) Follow conscience against their interests. (2) Wish to reform from evil habits, but fear they will not be able to hold out. (3) Look wistfully on a Christian life, but doubt if they would be able to maintain it. (4) Are exceedingly troubled in regard to expected events. (5) Are troubled about relative afflictions. (6) Are troubled about their own death.—*H. W. Beecher.*

### THE MAJESTY OF ISRAEL'S GOD.—*Verses 26-29.*

Conclusion of blessings corresponds with introduction. The kingdom was founded in Jehovah the salvation of his people. So in conclusion Jehovah is their eternal refuge, and they are blessed in Him. These probably the last words Moses wrote. The next chapter added by another writer. God's majesty and power set forth in splendid imagery.

**I. Inimitable in his perfections.** Not like the vanities of nations; if real, they cannot be compared with the Almighty. 1. *Literal in existence.* "The eternal God"—not of yesterday; before time, before all worlds; ever *was, is, and will be* the same unchangeable, wise and holy being, "the everlasting God." 2. *Unequalled in majesty.* "None like unto the God of Jeshurun." "Every nation boasted of its God, but none had such a God to boast of as Israel had." "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

**II. Powerful in His protection.** "Thy refuge." 1. *Arms to sustain.* "Underneath are the everlasting arms"—arms which never relax their embrace, never get weary and strong as omnipotence, bearing up, carrying and keeping from falling the weakest child that trusts them. 2. *Strength to overcome.* "He shall thrust out the enemy." God drove out the heathen to plant them (Ps. xc. 1). He will dislodge our enemies, open up the way, conquer principalities and powers, and put us in possession of heaven. 3. *Confidence in security.* "Israel then shall dwell in safety." When planted by God, he is a strong tower and protection, without earthly bulwarks, alliances, and resources; even in opposition and danger God gives confidence and security. "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks" (Is. xxxiii. 16).

**III. Constant in oversight.** God never forgets, nor forsakes. No people so well provided for as Israel. 1. *Abundant provision.* "The fountain of Jacob" overflows in streams of mercies and never dries. 2. *Useful provision.* Corn, wine, and oil to sustain and refresh; the products of earth, "wheat and barley, vines and fig-trees," and the blessings of heaven, everything needful and substantial, "God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth." 3. *Constant provision.* "The heavens shall drop down dew." The early and latter rain and fruits in season; no stint, no scarcity. "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure" (Is. xxxiii. 16).

**IV. Merciful in deliverance.** "A people saved by the Lord." Rescued from Egypt, preserved in the desert, and ever kept from harm. This not by Israel's sword nor Israel's skill, but their salvation bought and defended by Jehovah. If we take the glory of national deliverances, admire and applaud the courage that gained them and the wisdom that planned them, our right hand will become palsied, and victory may be followed by shameful defeat. "O Israel, trust thou in the Lord, he is their help and their shield."

V. Victorious in contest. When God undertakes, no one can contend with him; this adds madness to folly. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" 1. *Victory is easy.* "Thine enemies found liars" who predicted failure. 2. *Victory is complete.* "Thou shalt tread upon," subdue all opposition; assail "their high places" and level them to the dust. Satan to be trod upon shortly, death and the powers of hell subdued. Free, complete, everlasting victory. "Salvation is of the Lord."

#### THE HAPPINESS OF ISRAEL IN GOD.—Verse 29.

God is "blessed for ever" and the source of blessing to his people. He derives no happiness from them but imparts it to them. "Happy art thou, O Israel."

I. Happy in the presence of God. Who is their home, refuge and dwelling place. Man wants rest and blessedness, a centre of unity, a perfect home. These only found in God. Earthly home, a mere shadow, a type of eternal home. In seeking this home, God is with his people. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest."

II. Happy in the salvation of God. "O people saved by the Lord." Israel's deliverance a type of salvation in Christ—Christians like ancient Israel, a people separated, saved and exalted. "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name and to triumph in thy praise."

III. Happy in the protection of God. "The eternal God is thy refuge." He was the shield of their help—Israel "dwelt safely alone" among enemies. Without treaties and alliances with other nations. God protects—(1) *In defensive War*, "their shield," which nothing can pierce or turn aside. "With favour wilt thou compass (crown) him as with a shield" (Ps. v. 12.) (2) *In offensive War*, "their sword." To slay their foes, ensure their progress and gain them eminence. "The sword of thy excellency."

IV. Happy in the triumph of God. God's wonders were terrible in reality and report. 1. *Fear put the enemy to flight.* "The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (Gen. xxxv. 5; cf. Ex. xxiii. 27; Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25). 2. *Fortifications were no defence.* God, higher than the loftiest bulwark, "rideth upon the heaven" in splendour, power, and supremacy. Is this God your God? Then His heavenly favour, protection, and triumph, are yours. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

#### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Ver. 23. *Satisfied.* 1. Men *thirst*, are not happy, dissatisfied. 2. God's favour alone can satisfy, things seen and heard give no permanent enjoyment, Ecc. i. 8. "Our own will, although it should obtain its largest wish, would always keep us in uneasiness" (*Pascal*). "Satisfied with favour." He that cometh to me shall

never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Ver. 26. *Rideth to help.* 1. The *source* of help. "Heaven." 2. The *swiftness* of help. Riding as one on horse, coming with irresistible might. 3. The *majesty* of help. Rides in state and splendour, in magnificence

of clouds and awful grandeur. 4. The *variety* of help. Heaven and earth united, thunder and lightning, hail-stones and artillery, "excellency on the sky." "Having the celestial creatures for his cavalry, and the terrestrial for his infantry; how then can his want help" (Trapp). 5. The *sufficiency* of help. "None like him" in power and disposition.

Ver. 27. *The eternal God*, Heb., the God of antiquity, that "ancient of days," that "Rock of Ages," "who is before all things, and by whom all things consist" (Col. i. 17), "who is the first and the last, and besides whom there is no God" (Is. xlv. 6) Trapp. *Thy Refuge, God the home of the soul*. 1. Man a homeless creature. A wanderer in the wilderness, seeking habitation and rest. 2. God a home, for shelter, provision, and rest. "Our dwelling place in all generations." *Everlasting arms*. 1. Long enough to embrace eternity. 2. Strong enough never to get weary. 3. Ready enough to embrace any that come. 4. Yet "stretched out" in patience, perseverance and love, to "disobedient," rebellious "children," "all day long," Rom. x. 21. What a tender, compassionate attitude of God towards sinners! The glory of God's forbearance a bitter ingredient of misery at last. The words a description of God's power also. Power to lift up the lowest and most degraded, to protect and shelter the weakest and most timid. "As the arm is the emblem of *power*, and of power in a state of *exertion*, the words here state

that an unlimited and unconquerable power shall be eternally exerted in the defence of God's church, and in the behalf of all those who trust in him." A. Clarke.

*Destroy them*. 1. The duty. "Destroy them," spare no sin, no enemy. Not merely maim, utterly irradicate them and leave nothing undone. 2. The *strength to perform it*. "He shall thrust out, &c." God goes before in providence, accompanies in person and equips for success.

Ver. 29. *Happy*. 1. God's people happy in this life. Trusting in God they have contentment, hope and security. 'All things work together for their good, a real, solid, happiness, not momentary joy or feverish excitement. "Happy art thou, O Israel." 2. Happy in death. Guilt and fear taken away, death and hell conquered. "The end is peace." "The battle is fought," said Dr. Rayson, "and the victory is won for ever, I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness to all eternity." 3. Happy in the world to come. Heaven a place of peace and felicity. No discord nor disorder there. A realization of How's conception, "the blessedness of the righteous," and Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest."

Man's sickly soul, though turned and toss'd for ever

From side to side, can rest on nought but thee;  
Here, in full trust; hereafter, in full joy.  
On thee, the promised, sure eternal down  
Of spirits, toil'd in travel through this vale. —  
Young.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 2. *Shined*. Contemplate the exalted attributes of Deity; the displays of His glory; the splendours of His throne; the amplitudes of His dominions; the angelic orders of His kingdom; the richness of His gifts, and the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for His people (J. Wilson). *Saints*. The interest felt by the angels in all that concerns the Gospel and the

eternal interests of men put on their probation, form a very humbling contrast to our cold indifference.—Adams.

Ver. 4. *Law*. A law is valuable, not because it is law, but because there is right in it; and because of this rightness it is like a vessel carrying perfume; like the alabaster enclosure of a lamp.—Beecher.



Ver. 6. *Live.* Every man's life lies within the present, for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain.—*Antonius.*

Vers. 9-11. *Observed Thy word—*

How fond it were to wish for such a King,  
And no obedience to His sceptre bring,  
Whose yoke is easy, and His burthen light;  
His service freedom, and His judgments right.

—*Waller.*

Ver. 12. *Beloved of the Lord.* Two gentlemen were once riding together, and as they were about to separate, one said to the other, "Do you ever read your Bible?" "Yes; but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell the truth, I do not feel that I love God." "Neither did I," replied the other, "but God loved me." This answer produced such an effect upon his friend that he said, "It was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies." It opened up to his soul at once the great truth, that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me.

Vers. 18, 19. *Going out.* Trades exemplify dependence and mutual help. Precisely because no man can reach perfection in all the arts, and be a proficient in every profession, the progress of civilization requires the division of labour; not division in the sense of hostility, but a division of works with a common will—many departments with one interest, "diversities of operation with the same spirit." Not more completely does the wheel of the engine depend upon the boiler, or the rod upon the valve, than one individual upon another in the more intricate and wondrous mechanism of society.

Heaven forming each on other to depend,  
A master, or a servant, or a friend,  
Bids each on other for assistance call,  
Till one man's weakness grows the strength  
of all.

—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

Ver. 20. *Lion.* Wonderful is the case of boldness in civil business. What first? Boldness. What second and third? Boldness.—*Bacon.*

Ver. 23. *Satisfied with favour.* "My soul hath found inexpressibly," said John Brown, of Haddington, "more sweetness and satisfaction in two words such as these—*thy God and my God*—than all the pleasures found in the things since the creation could equal."

Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,  
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

—*Cowper.*

Ver. 25. *Strength.* Dr. Doddridge was one day talking, much depressed, his very heart desolate within him; but, says he, passing a cottage door open, I happened at the moment to hear a child reading, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead.—*Jay.*

Ver. 27. *Thrust out.*

Rouse to some work of high and holy love,  
And thou an angel's happiness shall know.

Ver. 28. *Shield.* If heaven and earth shake God hath ordained and secured that his children shall be protected as they need and when they need. When the enemy is most strongly assaulting, at the last extremity, when every other refuge shall have been swept away.—*Bridges.* Creature extremity can never reach beyond the help of Omnipotence.

Ver. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel.*

O Israel, blest beyond compare;  
Unrivalled all thy glories are.  
Jehovah deigns to fill thy throne,  
And calls thine interest His own.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL NOTES.—This chapter, written after death of Moses, once formed an introduction to book of Joshua.

1-4. Moses ascends Nebo. Pisgah height, of which Nebo a peak; from which extensive prospect of land east of Jordan to Dan. Not Laish-Dan (Judges xviii. 27) which was not in Gilead.

Probably a town in north of Peræa. Utmost sea, Mediterranean, beyond which no land. Zoar, southern extremity of Dead sea (*cf.* Gen., xix. 22). See, really with the naked eyes miraculously strengthened.

5-6. Death and Burial of Moses. Word, *lit.* at the mouth of the Lord. "The sense clear from Gen. xlv. 21. Vulg. correctly "*jubente Domino.*" It denotes that Moses died, not because his vital powers were exhausted, but at the sentence of God, and as a punishment for his sin, *cf.* xxxii. 51.—(*Speak. Com.*) Buried. God buried him, an honour perhaps designed to sustain the authority of Moses, which might have been impaired through punishment. Sepulchre. Not merely lest he should become an object of superstitious honour, for Jews not prone to this particular form of error. But, bearing in mind the appearance at Transfiguration (*Mat.* xvii. 1-10) and what is said by Luke v. 9, we may conjecture that Moses after death passed into same state with Enoch and Elijah; and that his sepulchre could not be found, because shortly translated from it (*Speak. Com.*)

10-12. The character of Moses. Joshua filled with the *spirit* (*ver.* 9) of practical wisdom in manifold action (*Is.* xi. 2); but not like Moses, gifted with power to work signs and miracles, to found a kingdom and create a nation. None equalled him (except Jesus) in official dignity, holy character and intimate friendship with God. *Knew* God freely and familiarly conversed with him. This made him eminent above all prophets (*cf.* Num. xii. 8).

### UNREALISED VISIONS.—*Verses 1-8.*

The great parable of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness has one of its profoundest applications in the death of the two great leaders, Moses and Aaron. Men above all others entitled to enter the land of promise; neither falling in battle nor dying a natural death, both doomed to die by the sentence of Jehovah whom they served, and under whom they were leading the people. This startles into a recognition of the tragedy of life and the impress of reality. Aaron, the high priest of God, though infirm, a noble and saintly man; in character and service second only to his brother, led by Moses and his son out of the midst of the wondering, weeping people to die in priestly robes, on the lonely summit of the Mount in Edom. Moses must die on Nebo, but die alone; neither son nor brother to close his dying eyes or receive his last words. Yet in its romantic incidents and tragic crisis, his death a fitting close of his great heroic life. The command to climb Nebo and die after such a vision, seems a penal infliction wantonly aggravated. Imagination can scarcely enhance the mystery and the awe, terrible in deliberateness and conditions. Only sublimest faith could implicitly obey such a mandate. It is a twofold parable. *First, of the unrealised hope of human life.* 1. The unrealised hopes of human life; the frequent disappointments, the unfulfilled purposes which so often characterise it; and which, to the affections and the philosophy of life, are so mysterious and painful. Every life a pilgrimage seeking its goal in some Canaan of rest. We picture it, struggle for it and sometimes on verge of realizing it. We "see it with our eyes;" but in mysterious providence of life, forbidden "to go over." "Our purposes are broken off," we are disappointed, and resent if faith prevent not. Mark conditions under which Moses died. (1) While as yet his physical strength was undiminished, "His eye not dim," etc. (2) While as yet there seemed a great work for him to do, Jordan to cross, Jericho to conquer, Canaanites to drive out, etc. (3) He died just when bright prospects filled his eye, when all the hope of his life was about to be fulfilled. What explains this mystery or justifies the ways of God to man? Cannot always judge, but learn:

Success is not the chief nobility of life. 2. The chief blessedness of life is capability of service. 3. It is a blessed thing to die when the work has been so far done that it justifies the worker, demonstrates his character, vindicates his nobleness; so that he is not ashamed to leave it for completion; so that his friends are proud of its unfinished fragments. This not always given, but the faithful servants accepts the conditions. 4. The formal denial of our hopes may be the means of perfecting our character. 5. If in our service we have

sinned against right methods and tempers of service, sinned against Him whom we serve, it is well that his disapproval of our sin should be manifest. 6. The prohibition comes with gracious mitigations. The sting of death extracted. (1) What greater grace wrought in a man than acquiescence in such a mandate. (2) Moses is permitted to prepare for departure. (3) He is permitted to see his successor. 7. God honours his faithful servant by Himself preparing his sepulchre. 8. God fulfilled His promises and the hopes of his servant in a deeper and higher way than he anticipated.

*Second, of the visions which may inspire human life*, its unrealised hopes notwithstanding. To men who live greatly God gives visions through this very idealism of life, which are glorious inspiration and strength; visions of a great faith and a bright hope; of rest through the toil, of triumph while they fight, of heavenly perfection and blessedness. Many glorious visions had been given to Moses. Who knows but to the lofty soul of this man of God, Canaan would have been a disenchantment. Many of our realised hopes are. In the better country no shortcoming, no disappointment. Canaan may suffice for a suggestive prophecy; only God's heaven can be a satisfactory fulfilment. A great thing for faith to climb and stand on heights to survey the heritage of God. And the nearer Jordan, the more glorious the prospect. The goodly land is revealed. All earthly lights pale before the great glory, all things here seem little and unimportant in that great blessedness. "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared, etc." Thus Moses disappears from sight and God buries him. One more glimpse of him vouchsafed on "the Holy Mount." The prayer, "show me thy glory," was finally answered. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." "Such honour have all the saints."—*Dr. Allon's Vision of God.*

#### THE BURIAL OF MOSES—ITS LESSONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Strange and singular that the greatest of all Old Testament prophets should find a resting place in the earth and no man able to point it out. Sepulchres of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob among the groves of Hebron, Joseph's bones rest in Shechem, sepulchre of David by Jerusalem, the home of his heart. Neglect of the people did not leave the spot unmarked. Not what a Jew wished or what popular history would have framed, this death and burial, fitted to be a source of fruitful reflection.

I. God will have no one, living or dead, to stand between His creatures and Himself. II. God wishes men to see something more left of His servants than the outward shrine. III. God takes the honour of His servants into His own keeping. IV. God would teach men that He has a relation to His servants which extends beyond their death. V. God would teach men from the very first that His regard is not confined to any chosen soil. VI. There is one concluding lesson which has been reserved for us in its fulness, and which could be seen only partially by the Jews—that *the seeming failure in a true life may have at least a complete compensation*. Under the gospel this view clear. As God forgave the sin we see that long since he made up the loss. This a comfort to many who feel immeasurably distant from Moses, as if our nature were all broken by failure and flaw. A true purpose in life shall reach a perfect close one day, its shortcomings completed, its errors rectified, its visions realised. One greater than Moses ended life in what appeared utter failure, with His followers scattered, His mission rejected and He Himself betrayed to a death of agony and shame. But He cried, "It is finished," achieved success and secured it for all who take up the cross and follow Him. There is full compensation for failure in every true life, and the highest where struggle and loss have been



deepest. Most comforting of all these is reversal of consequences of sin in contrition and faith. The shadow on earth's dial-plate is turned back when eternal life is gained and the sun no more goes down. Like Moses we shall rise to have heart's desire, to look on the land and on Him who is the glory of it.

*Rev. John Ker.*

### THE DEATH OF MOSES.

**I.** The greatest of men are but instruments in God's hands, and He can afford to lay them aside when He chooses. Moses seemed indispensable. None of similar ability and character to carry on work, yet God determined to move him. Paul, Luther, Wesley, and great reformers removed, yet truth survives, progresses and triumphs. **1.** Let this dispel fears for future of the Church of God. **2.** Abate personal pride, and—**3.** Calm our fears for loved ones. "God, the husband of the widow," etc. **II.** The time and the manner of each man's removal from earth are fixed by God. **III.** When God removes His servants from earth, it is that He may take them to Heaven. **IV.** Until God calls us away, let us be diligent in doing good. **V.** God frequently gives intimation that He is about to call them to Himself. **VI.** God will remove all difficulties away in our heavenward journey. Adapted from Vol. II. *Preachers' Monthly*.

"In His bless'd life,  
I see the path, and, in His death, the price,  
And in His great ascent, the proof supreme  
Of immortality."—*Young*.

### THE CHARMING PROSPECT.—Verses 1-4.

"The plains of Moab," the last station before entrance to Canaan (Num. xxxiii. 48). The prospect from Pisgah, charming in beauty and extent. About 160 miles in length and 50 or 60 in breadth. We borrow many of the following hints from an American *Sunday School Journal*.

**I.** The method of discerning it. He glanced *before*, not below him. In clear atmosphere, he saw verdure, sunshine and "the glory of all lands." How? **1.** *With the naked eye.* "His eye not dim." Beauty everywhere if only an eye to see. An artist's eye; a poet's eye. Culture and communion with God help to discern and appreciate landscapes. **2.** *With the help of God.* "The Lord showed him." Indicated direction, gave supernatural strength to follow it. The eye and the object from God. To him are we indebted for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Natural and spiritual vision, "the hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord hath made."

**II.** The summit from which it was viewed. Moses went up from the plains to the mount. Clouds and conflict below. We must rise higher and higher for rest, intercourse with God and heaven. The celestial city viewed from the delectable mountains. On the Mount of Transfiguration we see the glory of Christ. From Pisgah we discern Canaan. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

**III.** The hopes which were realised by it. Moses had written of places which he had never seen. Memory would sweeten this prospect. **1.** *The land was secured to the people.* Promised and were about to possess it. **2.** *"He was reaping the recompense of reward."* Not overwhelmed with grief, because excluded from earthly inheritance. "He desired a better country, that is a

heavenly." He saw the type, but taken up to the reality. "In the death of a good man eternity is seen looking through time."—*Goethe*. When we see the salvation of God we may pray, "Lord now let thy servant depart in peace."

### THE SLEEPING SAINT.—*Verses 5-7.*

"Moses, the servant of the Lord, died," and rests from his labours.

**I. Moses died by command of God.** But his change more like sleep than death. Lazarus slept. Believers "fall asleep in Christ." God put him to rest as you gently lay a child to sleep. "The Jewish doctors so expound this text, as though God did indeed take away his soul with a kiss (the loving mother is seen to kiss the child and then lay it down to sleep); and so of their 903 kinds of death, this they say is the easiest. God bade Moses go lie down and sleep (Deut. xxxi. 16), and he accordingly went to bed when his Father bade"—*Trapp*. "Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers."

**II. Moses was buried by the hand of God.** God himself, or Michael at command of God "buried him." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He cares for soul and body. "No man knoweth of His sepulchre unto this day." We shall not speculate or discuss about it. "The grave is not deep; it is the shining tread of an angel that seeks us."—*Richter*.

O, lonely tomb in Moab's land !  
O dark Bethpeor's hill !  
Speak to these anxious hearts of ours  
And teach them to be still.  
God hath his mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell ;  
He hides them deep like the sacred sleep  
Of him he loved so well.

—*D. M. Moir*.

### HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 1. *Moses went up. Climbing mountains.*** An address for children.

1. It is itself a picture: the old, clear-visioned, vigorous man, climbing the rugged and lofty mountains east of Canaan. His life a series of historical pictures the most impressive and instructive. The lesson is a picture of Canaan the most beautiful. 2. Climbing mountains! What boy or girl will not be interested in that? 3. The thoughts that may have entered Moses' mind as he looked out on hills, plains, valleys, and river below, and the sea beyond!

***Moses a Man of Mountains.***

1. Mountain of conflict (Ex. xvii. 10).
2. Of the law (Ex. xix. 20).
3. Of communion with God (Ex. xxiv. 15-18).
4. Of bereavement (Num. xx. 23-29).
5. Of vision and of death (Deut.

xxxiv. 6). 6. Of transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 7). Mount Zion (Heb. xii. 22-24). —*S. S. Journal*.

***Went up.*** 1. A good man's life an ascent. At God's command, and by God's help, in knowledge, strength, and meetness for heaven. 2. A good man's death an ascent. May be in the valley, but guided through and lifted up. "God ordered that Aaron and Moses should go up to the tops of mountains to die," says J. Edwards, "to signify that the death of a godly man is but an entrance into a heavenly state." "Death is to the good an ascension."

**Ver. 4. *The Lord showed him.*** God gave Moses that day (1) a lesson in *eye-teaching*. 2. A lesson in *geography*. 3. A lesson in *prophecy*—tribes not yet

located. God showed him where He would locate them. 4. A lesson in history. "I swear unto Abraham," etc. v. 4.—*S. S. Journal*.

a chastisement—a public visitation for sin in the eye of all the hosts of Israel—yet in some respect an honourable one.—*Dr. Cumming*.

Vers. 5, 6. "*Moses died according to the word of the Lord.*" What occurred in this case, occurs in that of every Christian. All three—time, place, and manner—are fixed in the word of the Lord. Here a higher power interposes and disposes of man's existence upon earth. The death of Moses was *solemn, sudden*, and though

*Thoughts on the death of Moses.*  
I. The best must die: "the servant of the Lord." II. The best may die in the zenith of their greatness. III. The best may die when apparently indispensable. IV. The best may die where they little expect. V. But all die when and where God decrees.—*R. A. Griffin*.

#### A WEeping PEOPLE.—Verse 8.

Seven days the usual time of mourning, for persons of rank and eminence, thirty (Gen. l. 3, 10; Num. xx. 29). Moses absent when he died, was not carried in public procession, hence bitter mourning (see *Josephus Ant.* Bk. iv. chap. viii., sect. 48). I. Bereaved by a mysterious event. Families robbed of heads, Christian churches of best workers, nations of leaders. We lose their counsels, influence and prayers, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." We cry at the departure of every leader, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men." II. Punished for strange ingratitude. Israel often complained and rebelled against Moses, did not treat him kindly. Now missed, and murmurers are mourners. "It is infamy to die and not be missed."—(*Wilcox*). III. Taught by a wise providence. The justice, truth and firmness of God must be known (Deut. xxxii. 49–52). They must be taught that God depends not upon any of his creatures, and that the best, most holy and most useful must die. "The fathers where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever!"

When some men die, a nation feels;  
When others fall, the world is moved.

#### A WORTHY SUCCESSOR.—Verse 9.

Anxiety of parents to be succeeded in business and profession by children, of noblemen by heirs, of monarchs by princes. Joshua a worthy successor.

I. He was introduced by Moses. "Moses had laid his hands upon him," and thus designated the person and conferred the power (Num. xxvii. 18, 23). No breaks, no vacancies in God's service. One goes, another comes; one finishes what another leaves incomplete. A leader succeeds a lawgiver. "The law," says Bp. Wordsworth, "led men to see the promises afar off, and to embrace them (rather to see and greet the promises from afar, Heb. xi. 13), and it brought them to the borders of Canaan, but could not bring them into it; that was reserved for Joshua, the type of Jesus."

II. He was qualified by special endowments. "Full of the spirit of wisdom." Intimacy with Moses and training under his care not enough. He had faith (Num. xiv. 6–9), and experience (Ex. xvii. 8–13); but required Divine gifts and graces to fit him to govern. The disciples had been with Jesus, but not equipped until the spirit given. Friendship and education, patronage and office, were shreds of honour. "The Spirit needed" as a spirit of wisdom, counsel, and might (Is. ii. 2).



**III. He was successful in his work.** "The children of Israel hearkened unto him," etc. Gifted men admired. The presence and authority of God with His servants will secure the affection and obedience of the people. Joshua owned as leader and prosperous in undertaking. By strength of character, and superlative wisdom, men rise to honour and success; wield an influence after death, and become saviours and kings in society. "On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life" (Jos. iv. 14; iii. 7; i. 5).

THE INFLUENCE OF A HOLY LIFE.—*Verses 10-12.*

Moses here commended for character official position and privilege. Unique in greatness and honour. "There arose not a prophet," etc.

**I. The source from which the influence came.** Fellowship with God, "whom the Lord knew," conversed with "face to face" (Num. xii. 8). Intercourse with God gives power with man. None great and successful without this (Jacob, Joshua, Daniel and Luther). Retirement most requisite, most seasonable in our pressing and incessant duties. Moses in Midian (Ex. ii. 15; iii. 1); John the Baptist in the desert (Luke i. 30); Jesus in Nazareth (Matt. ii. 23). "Learn to live alone," said Dr. Paley, when recommending to the younger clergy, communion with God. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place."

**II. The method by which the influence was acquired.** "The Lord sent" him and he went "in the land of Egypt" to deliver the people. Obedient to God he was endowed with the power of God. Entire consecration of time and talents brings its reward. In the words of the apostle, we have the influence of devout life upon ministerial success. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts vi. 4). "The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

**III. The ages through which the influence lasted.** None like Moses in the days of Israel, and after intervening centuries he was still considered "Mighty in words and deeds" (Acts vii. 22). The power of such a life not destroyed by one failure. Memory survives death, and deeds never pass into oblivion and the tomb. Myriads crowd the lower walks of life, removed and no more missed than atoms from the base of a lofty pyramid. But men conspicuous for virtues and holy deeds will live in name and influence and act upon the race till the end of time. "The righteous had in everlasting remembrance."

"To hew his name out upon time  
As on a rock; there in immortality  
To stand on time as on a pedestal."

HOMILETIC HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

**Ver. 9. Joshua chosen.** All spiritual endowments from the Holy Ghost. The spirit of wisdom, courage and the fear of God specially needed for well-qualified leaders of men. Admire the goodness of God in raising up such men. If one burning and shining light is extinguished "the Father of lights" can kindle another.

**Vers. 10-12. Not a prophet like Moses.** Unequalled. 1. In rank. 2. In faithfulness to duty (Num. xii. 7; Heb. iii. 1-6). 3. In legislative wisdom and 4. In divine authority, displayed (a.) in signs to the enemy (b.) in terror to Israel. Moses was warrior, statesman, poet, philosopher, hero and saint. No man has rivalled him, nor robbed

him of his honour. "A prophet who stood by himself in his greatness in relation to men and to God. To be the leader of a nation in such peculiar circumstances for 40 years was in itself a position without a parallel; but to have led them out of Egypt against the will of their enslavers, to have

been at their head during a whole generation of which every day witnessed a stupendous miracle, to have been the founder of their laws and their religion, was a work such as far outshone the deeds of any one man from the beginning of history, and such as still remains unique."—*Blunt*.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vers. 1-4. *Showed*. "My work is done; I have nothing to do but to go to my Father;" said the Countess of Huntingdon. "I am on the bright side of seventy—bright side, because nearer to the everlasting glory." *Top of Pisgah*. The loneliness of death. Ordinarily when men die, there are friends to gather round their bed, with tender ministries of love and prayer. Sometimes in the case of men like Moses, a nation will hush its footsteps and wait the issue with agonising suspense. Shut us up to die alone, with no hand that our weakness may clasp, no tear that may soothe our love, no prayer that may wing our hope, and how appalling death becomes. What pathos there is in the shrinking wail of Pascal—"I shall die alone!"—*Dr. Allon*.

*Went up*. What a contrast to a former Divine summons, to ascend Sinai to commune with Jehovah, to receive from Him comfort and strength and a renewed commission of service! Yet he evinces none of the trembling

awe with which he ascended Sinai. Without remonstrance, without hesitancy save for a moment, he calmly obeys the stern injunction. "A good man knows how to die" (*Dr. Allon*). "Death cannot come to him untimely who is fit to die" (*Milman*).

Climb the ascent of being  
And approach for ever nearer to the life divine.

Ver. 5. *The servant of the Lord died*. A man of God has fallen to-day.

Ver. 8. *Weeping*. When Augustus died the Romans wished that either he had never been born or had never died.

Ver. 10. *Not a prophet since*. Moses was one that exceeded all men that ever were in understanding, and made the best use of what that understanding suggested to him.—*Josephus*.

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime, etc.

THE END.

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